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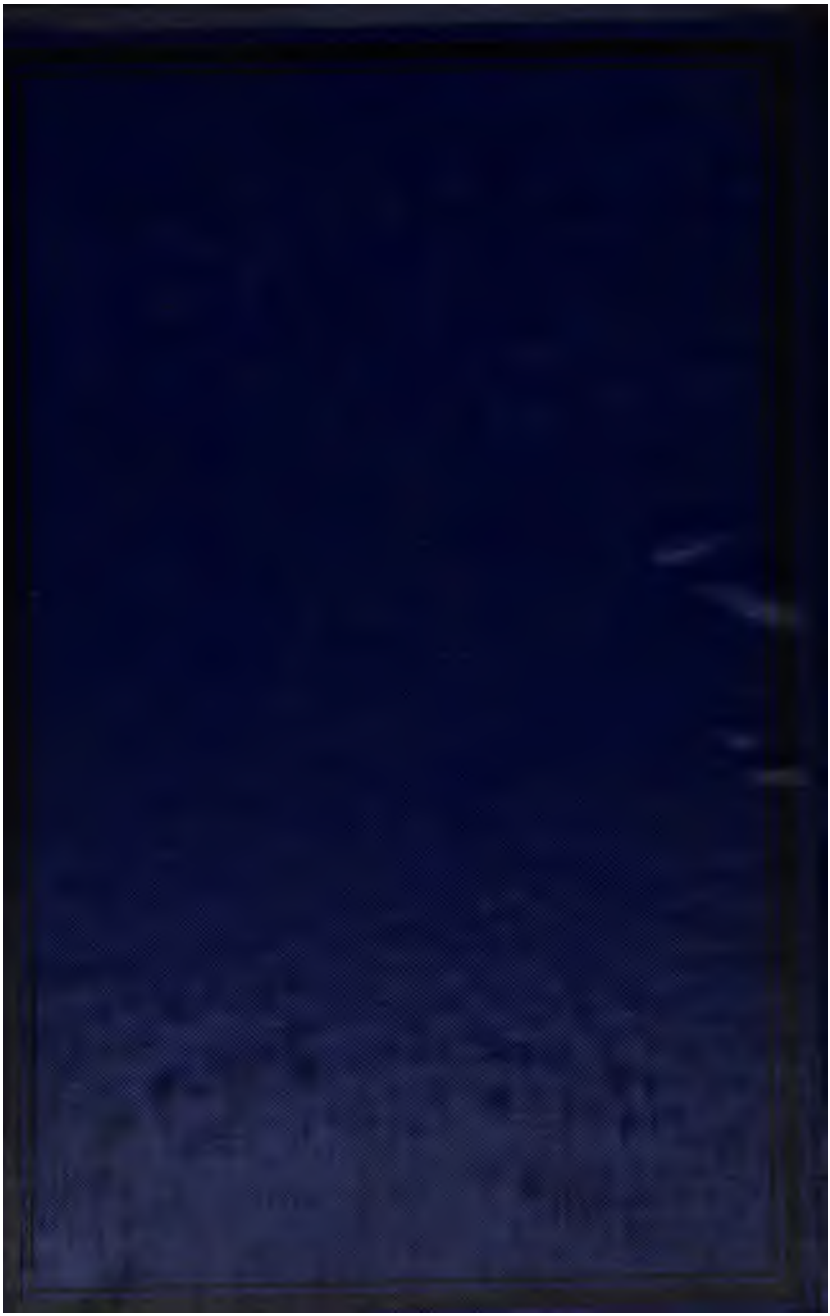

THE

CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH.

THE

CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH;

OR,

THE CHURCH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT A REPUBLIC,

AND THE ONLY POSSIBLE REPUBLIC TRULY DEMOCRATIC AND SOCIAL.

Vive la Republique, Democratique et Sociale.

EDINBURGH: JOHN MACLAREN.
LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO.
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BODLEIANA
BIBLIOTHECA

PREFACE

THE opinions expressed in the following pages have long been present to my mind, and have in various forms partially found an utterance. A few years ago I got a small tractate printed, which is the foundation of the present essay, and which contained very much the same views in another form; after about thirty copies had been disposed of, finding that a particular and offensive application had been given to an expression which I meant merely to be the expression of a general truth, the whole edition was destroyed, choosing rather to suffer the loss than hurt the feelings of one whom I would be the last to offend.

Building on this tractate as a foundation, I have appropriated for the superstructure, without scruple and without remorse, whatsoever I found suitable to my purpose in the course of a promiscuous and very desultory reading. Like as I have read that the architects of Venice, on account of the poverty of the soil in building materials, and on account of the unaptness of the workmen for the work, had to build

with precious blocks of marble, and shafts and capitals ready sculptured, taken from the buildings of other lands; so have I had, on account of my own barrenness, to borrow largely from various sources, and on account of my want of skill in literary composition, to exhibit my ideas in borrowed phrases and expressions, rather than send them forth more meanly clad in a garb of language of my own manufacture.

I believe, however, that my poverty is my riches, and my weakness my strength, and that any power this essay may have either to confute or to persuade, will rather be found to lie in the materials I have appropriated than in those I have produced. I am not, therefore, very anxious to claim the parentage of a work which can confer so little credit on its Author, but I am very anxious that the spirit of the work should go forth,—that the principles of it should be broadcast,—and that the opinions to which I have endeavoured to give expression should find acceptance.

I am aware that the opinions I entertain are as yet covered with the haze of obscurity, as with a mantle; they show not a very distinct or definite outline; they are but as the seed which is enveloped in the husk, or as the diamond (it may be of the first water) which is encrusted with the rude and worthless materials of the matrix wherein it was formed. The faith thus enveloped in this little essay is, that at the beginning the Church of the New Testament was a

veritable republic, democratic and social, and that at the last it will resume its primary form, and constitute the only truly democratic and social republic of which humanity is capable. But to arrive at right ends we must use right means, and begin from right principles. This essay attempts to exhibit the true principle of the Church's organization, separate and apart from all the vain imaginations of man, and from all the products of his ingenuity, pride, prejudice, and ambition, and to show how, by basing the structure on the sure foundation of justification by faith, and building it up of those "lively stones" which, having life in themselves, authenticate the profession of their faith by their lives and conversation, the Church will come forth a glorious Church, "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing."

Did these views, which are seemingly so much opposed to public opinion, and certainly to public practice, find favour in public estimation by reason of the excellency of speech or of wisdom with which they were promulgated, or by means of the influence or social position of their advocate, the probability is, that that which adventitious circumstances had caused so rapidly to grow up and flourish, would, like the gourd of Jonah, as rapidly fade and fail. In vital organizations, whatsoever is enduring is of slow growth, and of a gradual progression. A handful of corn upon the earth may, by the blessing of God, if the sun shines upon, and the clouds of heaven descend upon it, awaken to newness of life; for it is not dead, but

sleepeth, and in the time of the harvest produce a crop of prosperous fruit, like the trees that be in Lebanon; for so long as life remains it is continually going forward from strength to strength, absorbing, transmuting, and assimilating congenial particles from the soil in which it is embedded, until that which was sown in dishonour shall be raised in glory, coming forth in a new form, a glorious resurrection, first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear, in which the form and quality of the original seed reappears multiplied a hundredfold.

I do not expect that my views will find many supporters, nor that my little volume will find many readers. What, then, it may be asked, are my expectations regarding it, or what is the object of the publication? I expect no immediate good from it, but I hope and trust that that which is perhaps now only the germ of an idea in one particular mind, may, if it have life in itself (which I believe it to have), and happen to fall upon good soil, upon hearts prepared for its reception, take root, gain strength, spring up in a new form and fashion, after the writer of the tractate and his tract have disappeared off the stage, forgotten and unknown, and bring forth fruit abundantly of the form and quality of the original seed, until the little one shall become a thousand, and that shall become public opinion, which at the first was but the faith of a few. "If a thing be a true thing (says Mr. Carlyle), no matter though it be a small

thing, it will grow;" and this is my hope, and this is my only desire respecting it.

"Thou fool (says the Apostle), that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." Though it tarry wait for it, because it will *surely* come, it will not tarry.

EDINBURGH, 1861.

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THE CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH.

CHAPTER I.

THE FORESHADOWING OF THE PROGRESS AND CONSUMMATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

THE sequence in the process of conversion of every regenerated soul is,—First, The acceptance of Christ as a Prophet, in respect to his relation of the Heavenly realities. Then, of Christ as a Priest, by whom the way unto the Heavenlies was opened. And lastly, of Christ as a King, prescribing rules and regulations for the conduct, whereby the believer is made meet for the inheritance of the saints in glory.

Christ Jesus came from the Father to reveal to man things which are undiscoverable by his natural reason, and to restore to man the knowledge of those things he had lost by reason of transgression. As a prophet he declared, in opposition to the gross and material conceptions of man, "That God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." And in opposition to the polytheism of the world, that our God is one God—God over all, blessed for ever. Christ also, as

a prophet, brought life and immortality to light by his gospel. He discovered the recompence of the reward, the prize of the high calling to which he invited men to aspire.

As a priest, Christ himself became the mediator between God and man. The Daysman who laid his hands upon us both. The only way of access to the Father, through the rent veil of his own flesh. The only name given under heaven whereby men may be saved. "For every high priest standeth daily ministering, and offering ofttimes the same sacrifice, which can never take away sin, but this man (the man Christ Jesus), after he had offered one sacrifice for sin, even his own body upon the cross, sat down at the right hand of God, a priest for ever after the order of Melchezideck; henceforward expecting until his enemies be made his footstool."

These things which we are to believe, are the foundation of the things which we are commanded to do —they comprehend the sanctions of the great salvation, they unfold the motives of obedience, and discover the recompence of the reward.

As a king, merciful and gracious, claiming our willing obedience, Christ promulgated the precepts of the gospel, not as arbitrary commandments, but as our reasonable service; and demanded our conformity to his will, not for his pleasure, but for our profit. From him, the prophet and the priest, proceeded in the exercise of the kingly office the regulations and the rules of life, whereby men were to grow up into meetness

for the inheritance he was preparing for them. If the foundations be destroyed, if our hopes repose not on the revelations of the prophetical and priestly offices, if our faith be not to us the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen, then "eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die," would appear to be a far more reasonable philosophy than the self-denial and self-sacrifice which the precepts of the gospel require. But, resting on the prophetical revelations, and on the priestly character, obedience to the commandments of Christ becomes a reasonable service, and should be a willing duty. Between the different offices of Christ there is an indissoluble union and beautiful harmony subsisting; the blessing promised in the gospel descends from him whom it is the business of the prophetical office to reveal, through him whom it is the function of the priestly office to make manifest, as the only way of access to the throne of grace, and men realise the blessing according to the deeds done in the body, in obedience to the morality which the kingly office promulgates.

The revelations of the prophetical and priestly offices are objects of faith, they are high above and beyond the sphere of our natural reason; the natural man cannot receive them—they are foolishness to him, he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned. The things to be believed are inaccessible to human reason, they are the mystery of godliness; profoundly mysterious, they are the objects of faith, which is the gift of God—an objective power of believing

graciously superadded to the natural faculties of man, so that he might know the things which are freely given him of God; things which could not be discovered or apprehended by his natural reason. Having grounded our faith on the revelations of the priestly and prophetical offices, Christ proceeded, in the exercise of the kingly office, to unfold the practice which should emerge therefrom, or what manner of persons we ought *therefore* to be, in all holy conversation and godliness.

A perfect simplicity and universal applicability is that which distinguishes the gospel, when compared with the cumbrous and partial inventions of men. The gods of the nations of old were the gods of particular tribes and places, and the religions of the Mohammedan and Hindoo of the present day, the most intelligent and refined of the non-Christian people, cannot be practised in their integrity, the one much beyond the limits of the torrid zone, nor the other beyond the more circumscribed boundaries of Hindustan. But the religion of Jesus is fitted for universality and perpetuity—its precepts may be obeyed everywhere, and its sacred societies may be formed in any number and to any extent, because no ordinance necessarily connects them with the customs of any people, or with the peculiarities of any clime. Its nature remains everywhere the same for ever—the one faith, the one Lord, the one baptism—while there are diversities of gifts and differences of administration.

Regenerated men are the materials which Christ is fostering and furnishing by his Spirit for the construction of the temple which He is building to God out of every kindred and people and tongue. As men, in their collective capacity, can exhibit no results but such as have their origin in feelings, and tastes, and practices common amongst them, it is obvious that any defects or blemishes in the constituent materials would mar the beauty and impair the consistency of the entire fabric. The Church of Christ cannot then exhibit the embodiment of the prime Ideal, unless every "*lively stone*" has itself been fashioned after the "similitude of a palace," unto that perfect condition which is the faith of the gospel visible and incarnate. Each regenerated individual represents in miniature the Church itself, the general assembly of the first-born which is written in Heaven; "For know ye not (says the Apostle), that ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you;" the redeemed of the Lord are the temples of the Holy Ghost. "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are ye." These lively stones, complete and perfect in themselves, are, by the connexion of perfect parts, to form together a perfect whole, well pleasing to God; such as at the beginning was exhibited by the material world, when the stupendous work of creation was unveiled before an admiring universe; while the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted aloud for joy. And such, we are told, the moral world will yet

exhibit, when the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, shall shine over every land, and into every dwelling, and into every heart. The mystical body of Christ being like the created universe itself, one vast orb of glory, wrought up out of particles which have, each of them, been previously finished and perfected themselves. The Church of the first-born is not an institution in which men are placed in order to be made holy—it is a society of those who are already sanctified, and fashioned, not according to their lusts in their ignorance, but as He which has called them is holy, so are they holy in all manner of conversation.

The great end to be accomplished by the organisation of the Christian Church is to gather together into one a peculiar people, zealous of good works, and to draw a well-defined and distinct line of demarcation between the church and the world. The followers of Jesus were to have their names written distinctly on their foreheads, so that all men might take knowledge of them, and as God's witness on earth the Church—the community of believers—like a city set on a hill, was to testify for Christ in the face of an unbelieving world.

The individual believer is himself the Church in epitome, and the sequence in the acceptation of Christ by the church, in all his glorious and gracious attributes of prophet, priest, and king, we learn from the page of history to have been exactly similar to that sequence of which the believer is conscious in his

personal experience, a gradation which is indeed founded on the nature of things; for belief in the existence of God must precede our belief in Christ as the only way of access to God; and obedience to the precepts of Christ pre-supposes our acknowledgment of him, as the power of God and the wisdom of God. First must come belief in the things which are revealed, and then obedience to the commandments—which is the fruit of that faith. It is by men regenerated into righteousness by faith, and made meet for the inheritance by practice, that humanity will yet be reconstructed after the original design, and that restitution of all things be effected which God has spoken of, by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began.

That aspect of Christianity which declares the sin of idolatry and polytheism, and which substitutes for many, one God, supreme over all—God blessed for ever, was that which, in the early ages of the Church, the preacher of the new doctrine most importunately pressed upon the consideration of men. The great object of contention with the world, and with him who is the prince of the world, was *this* secret of the invisible universe, revealed to men by Christ, until when, by the conversion of Constantine, the revelation of the unity of God was made to supersede Paganism throughout all the gradations of society. In the conflict with the world and his master for the vindication of the prophetical office of Christ, the ingenuity of men was exercised in attempts to escape from the

explicit revelation of the heavenly realities, by a vain philosophy, fabricating and disseminating false and fanciful notions respecting the author of the universe, the creation and nature of man, his destiny, and relation to the Supreme; and it was not until men had emptied their hearts of the enmity that was in them, and had exhausted all their inventive faculties, and had come, so to speak, to their wits' end (blessed be God, man's extremity is God's opportunity), that the spirit of God moved upon the face of these dark and troubled waters of inextricable confusion, and by the conversion of Constantine, set his seal for ever to the acceptance of Christ as a prophet, throughout all the gradations of civilized society, from the king on his throne to the meanest of his subjects.

After the acceptance by the world of Christ as a prophet, by a profession of faith in the great truth he had revealed, "for no man had seen God at any time, the only Son of God, he had declared him," the whole force of the unsanctified intellect of man, and of his enmity, was turned against the priestly office of Christ, and against this pretension of the Saviour, either to its entire and absolute denial, or to the substitution of something else; that is, either to unconditional infidelity, or to the perversion of Antichristian delusion. The mysterious and vicarious atonement of Christ was superseded by self-inflicted penances and torments. The mediation of Christ, by the intercession of a saintly hierarchy of men of flesh and blood, and of like passions with ourselves. The forgiveness

of sins, by Papal indulgences and priestly absolutions, and justification by faith was set aside by the Popish doctrine of justification by works, which represents good works to be the meritorious cause, and not the evidence and fruits of salvation. Thus the revelations of Christ respecting himself, and of the way of access to heaven, and of the scheme devised in the counsels of eternity whereby justice and mercy are reconciled, were tampered with, and made to assume a mundane aspect, for the gratification of human pride, and the satisfaction of an avaricious priesthood. It was not until men had tried every mode of escape from the clear and obvious declarations of Holy Writ, and had produced every cunning invention and plausible perversion they were able to devise, that Luther was commissioned, for the vindication of the priestly office, to unfold with demonstration of the Spirit and with power, in opposition to the Papal doctrine of justification by works, so flattering to human pride, the evangelical doctrine of justification by faith—so humbling, yet so consolatory.

And now, the prophetical office having been vindicated in the days of Constantine, and the priestly office in the days of Luther, there remains only the kingly office for acceptation; and the battle to be fought in these last days is for the vindication of this last attribute of our great Redeemer; and as before, men are permitted to expatiate freely, without let or hindrance, over the pathless wastes of speculation and invention, and to fabricate for themselves ethical

systems, and philosophical moralities, and ecclesiastical and political organisations for the regeneration of man, irrespective altogether of their consistency with the sketch of the kingdom of heaven given for our guidance in the Revelation itself. It will not be until men are humbled under a sense of their own inability to work out the problem for themselves, that God will make bare his mighty arm for the subjugation of his enemies, who refuse to have his Son to reign over them, and for the establishment of his kingdom, when men everywhere shall bow before his sovereign authority in their ecclesiastical, political, and social arrangements, when the Church and state shall be identical, and when men need teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know him, from the least to the greatest.

We believe that, from the time the memorable words were uttered on Calvary, "It is finished," the malignant spirits of whom we read, "that they believe," believe as surely, and look forward as certainly, to the establishment of Christ's kingdom upon the earth, and to the restitution of all things, as do the most faithful and most hopeful of those who are called after his name. We believe that the warfare in which they are now engaged is not for victory, but for revenge. It is not to frustrate, but to retard the coming glory. It is not to annul, but to postpone. Christ the head of the Church they cannot assail, but they can bruise his heel, whose head they

cannot bruise, and thus through his members wound his compassionate heart. Like a skilful and indomitable warrior, when borne down by a foe he is unable to resist, the prince of the power of the air, he who rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience, in the intensity of his pride and malevolence, contests every inch of the battle-field, and seizes every ground of vantage to cover his retreat. We ought not at this time of day to be ignorant of the amazing versatility with which he can accommodate himself to the progress of society, and to the spirit of the times.

In the early ages of the Church, when compelled by the progress of the truth to abandon the position of senseless and abominable idolatry as no longer tenable, appearing to acquiesce in the doctrine of the unity of God, he fabricated the Mohammedan delusion, with such dexterous adaptation to the natural heart of man, as to constitute the strongest position of the infidel wherewith to retard the progress of the great Deliverer.

Again, among the faithful followers of Christ—faithful among the faithless found—who received, in addition to the unity of God, the doctrine of the atonement of Christ, the Church of Rome was organized, that masterpiece of Satan's workmanship wherewith to confound the army of the saints, a travestie of the true Church, so cunningly and artistically put together, that, if it were possible, the very elect might be deceived thereby.

And now, in these last days in which we live, when Mohammedan delusion is tottering to its fall, and the Papal superstition melting away under the beams of the Sun of Righteousness; when the doctrine is being extensively promulgated free from superstition; when, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, men would go forward unto perfection—we find the tactics of the adversary in these practical days to be essentially practical. We have no more to combat the elevated thoughts and reasonings high, which, with a philosophy falsely so called, bewildered our ancestors :—

> "Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
> Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
> And found no end in wondering mazes lost."

All this is changed; the seduction by which men are now led astray is the pursuit of right ends by unright means, the forsaking of the gospel plan of restitution for schemes of their own devising; or, in Scripture language, "Men are led to abandon the fountain of living waters, and to hew out for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Satan is never so dangerous as when he puts on a garment of light; it is not the black exhalation that misleads the wayfaring man, it is when the mephytic vapours become resplendent with light, that the traveller is allured from his path into the unstable footing of the morass.

This age is prolific of plans to improve the moral, physical, social, and intellectual condition of mankind.

We are often perplexed by the number and variety of the projects which profess, by simple and elementary rules, deduced from reason and natural law, to reorganise and regenerate society; there is much of apparent identity between the purposes for which the Church was organised, and the ends proposed to be attained by these theoretical schemes, yet all such schemes apart from the Church, though flattering to human pride—flattering to the wise and to the mighty, flattering to the host of the ungodly (for by them the Church is drawn nearer to the world)—are all derogatory to him to whom salvation belongeth, and who has sworn that his own right hand and holy arm shall achieve the victory; whose pre-eminent wisdom has organised the Church for instructing the ignorant, reclaiming the wayward, and giving a unity of purpose and of action to the benevolence of his people, for the promotion of his own glory, and the regeneration of the world.

The Church of Christ is the divinely-appointed instrument for blessing the nations in all their interests; it has the promise of this life, and of that which is to come. It were to libel the wisdom and power of the Supreme to doubt its all-sufficiency for the accomplishment of that to which he has appointed it; it is to insult the Almighty to his face, as if his arm were shortened that it could not save, when men add some of their own paltry contrivances, the ephemeral abortions of their self-sufficiency and conceit, to the glorious scheme of revelation for the

restitution of all things. The services which God requires of us are all such reasonable services, that zealous and enthusiastic men are induced to strive to accelerate the regeneration of society by schemes of their own devising; professing to be wise, they become fools; and separating themselves from the organisation of the Church, they fabricate a thousand plausible schemes of benevolence and of usefulness. Temperance societies, reformation societies, peace societies, societies for the propagation of the gospel, for diffusion of Christian knowledge, for relieving the destitute, reforming the dissolute, converting the unconverted—holy works all of them, if done in the way of the Lord's appointment; but who has required these things at your hands? Has not the Lord himself defined and determined the organisation whereby the world is to be regenerated, and the return of the Lord accelerated? We want no such abnormal associations for propagating the gospel, for relieving the destitute, reforming the dissolute, or instructing the ignorant; the Church of Christ comprehends them all. To the Church is entrusted the duty of instructing the ignorant, reclaiming the outcast, and the gathering together into one all the children of God scattered throughout the world. With a marvellous address, and an amazing exercise of the "deceivableness of unrighteousness," has the great adversary succeeded in detaching from the organised battalions of the heavenly host so many of their members, and to form them into independent associa-

tions for the promotion apparently of the very same objects as those for which the host itself was organised; thus weakening the general armament, and causing confusion by the multiplication of independent combatants on the same battle-field. So far as we have read over the records of the operations of war, no great or permanent results have ever been obtained by the irregular efforts of volunteers, detached from and independent of the organised body of assailants, though many individual names have been so highly emblazoned thereby, and the zeal and valour of individuals been made so conspicuous, that a charm has been given to the irregular service in all armies in the eyes of the enthusiastic and ambitious. But in the real tug of war, when host meets host, the irregulars, the sharp-shooters, the independent combatants, are all called in and arranged in the regulated ranks of war; the serried line, shoulder and shoulder together, stands ready for the conflict; and by it, and by it alone, is the issue of the fight determined—all previous operations were the mere playing at soldiers.

No doubt, wherever there is truth, there is Christ. Wherever there is mercy, there is Christ. Wherever there is love, there Christ is also. And therefore we would rejoice in the benevolent feeling indicated by ragged schools, and dormitories for houseless children, and reformatory institutions and such like, detached from the Church, were not the conviction forced upon us that all these things are mere inventions of

the "wicked one," transforming himself into an angel of light for the purpose of retarding the progress of the Church, by polluting what he cannot destroy, and obtaining for some worm of the dust the glory and the gratitude due solely to the Son of the living God. It is the borrowed and reflected light of the sun that causes the stars to glitter and sparkle in the firmament of heaven, yet it is only in the night that the stars appear; and the darker the night, the more numerously and brilliantly do they twinkle. In the full blaze of day there is but one glorious orb of light, before which all these lesser lights hide their diminished heads. The various associations external to the Church in which Christendom rejoices, so far from indicating a healthy, vigorous, and vital Christianity, seem rather an indication of its weakness. The human body when in health, when life is vigorous within it, has a power which dominates over the various affinities of its constituent elements, and compels them all to work together for the good of the whole and of every part in a willing obedience. It is when the life is weak within it, or when the spirit is departing from it, that the elements which were built up together, a temple of God through the Spirit, resume the tendencies of their natures, and fret and fester, and become the hot-beds which nourish and nurture the lower forms of organisation which anticipate mortality. "Is it not (says Foster in one of his admirable essays) as if the intellect of man were surrendered to be the sport of

some malicious and powerful spiritual agent, who could delight in playing it through all the traverses of fantastic movement, mocking at its self-importance, and diverted at its follies." So fantastically and ostentatiously do men display their want of confidence in the divine plan of reconstruction and restitution.

But, blessed be God, man's extremity is God's opportunity. Though men have sought out for themselves many inventions, it is the counsel of God that alone shall stand. It is when, by multiplied failures, men have been convinced of their own utter inability to obtain for themselves the objects of their pursuit, when the pride of man has been humbled, and the haughtiness of man has been brought low; when all his inventive faculties are exhausted, and under a sense of his own utter helplessness, he is made willing to receive with docility, in the plainness of the letter, the lessons of the Scriptures, that we may confidently expect, according to the analogy of former precedents, that God will revive by his Spirit the holy community to reassert the original purpose of the ecclesiastical organisation which was "to raise the poor out of the dust, and lift the needy out of the dunghill," and to establish liberty, equality, fraternity, among the members of the one family, gathering together into one, out of every kindred, and nation, and people, and tongue, those whom he had appointed to be saved.

The scriptural organisation of the Church admits

the formation of every kind of combination amongst its members which have the glory of God and the good of man for their object, each having its own circle within the circle of the great institution, which is destined, by the sure word of Him that cannot lie, to cover the whole earth, and effect the restitution of all things.

In the Revelation of St. John, we have given to us, for the confirmation of our faith and animation of our hope, a wonderful prefigurement of the tripartite contest for the supremacy of the triune God over his own creation, corresponding to the triplicity of the offices of Christ, and of the three persons in the Godhead. That mysterious book is divided into three parts, each of which comprehends the history of the contest for the vindication of one of the offices of Christ, in the order of prophet, priest, and king—the order of their development—and concludes with an ascription of praise and thanksgiving, on each several occasion, for the triumph of the particular truth. Thus, in the apocalyptic vision, (according to the best commentators,) the "seals" comprehend the history of the Church, from its origin to the conversion of Constantine, or the controversy with the pagan world for the vindication of the prophetical office.

The "trumpets,"—the history of the Church from Constantine to the Reformation, or the controversy with the Papacy for the vindication of the priestly office; and—

The "vials,"—the history of the Church from the

Reformation to the Consummation, or the controversy with the world for the establishment of the kingdom.

The three parts of this threefold revelation have had, or are to have, severally a distinct historical development, and a distinct reference severally to each person of the Holy Trinity; thereby confirming our faith in that mystery of godliness, the peculiar dogma of the Christian Church.

The contest with the pagan world was for the acceptance of the prophetical office of Christ, and had a special reference to God the Father. "We preach unto you that you should turn from these lying vanities, and serve the living God." This great truth triumphed when idolatry was abolished by the constituted authorities of the state, and when men professed to believe in the one only true God in the days of Constantine.

The contest with the Papacy, after Christ had been acknowledged for a prophet, was for the vindication of the priestly office, and had a special reference to God the Son. "Neither is there salvation in *any* other, for there is *no* other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved." The priesthood or "the way" was vindicated, when, at the Reformation, society throughout all its gradations accepted the doctrine of "justification by faith" in the sacrifice of our great High Priest.

The contest now raging is for the assertion and vindication of the kingly office, whereby Christ, our Prophet, and Priest after the order of Melchizedeck, King

and Priest in one, shall reign supreme over his own purchased possession, and has an especial reference to the dispensation of the Holy Ghost, by whom, after we believed, we are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. "For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." This contest must be continued, until Christ, the author and finisher of our faith, shall subdue all things under him, and become the truth, and the way, and the life, the Prophet, and the Priest, and the King. The life of the corporate body, the Church, being by the faith of the Son, Christ dwelling in it by his Spirit, which he has given it.

The first six "seals" of the Revelation include the period from the first promulgation of the Gospel to the overthrow of paganism. From the going forth of the White horse, conquering and to conquer, to the conversion of Constantine, when the heaven of pagan domination, the firmament of the "prince of the power of the air," "departed as a scroll when it is gathered together," and the great lights of the heathen world, the powers, civil and ecclesiastical, fell into the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely fruit when she is shaken with a high wind. "And I beheld, and all the angels stood round about the throne and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped, saying, Amen. Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God, for ever and ever. Amen."

But the vision is one, and the interpretation one. The Revelation of Christ, like his own robe, woven throughout, and without seam, cannot be divided, and yet remain his gospel. To preserve the continuity of the vision, and the connexion of the Revelation throughout, the seventh seal introduces and embraces the whole period of the seven trumpets. "On the opening of the seventh seal (it is written) I saw the seven angels which stood before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. The trumpets relate to the great events in which the interests of the Church were involved throughout the fierce struggles with the barbarians, who overrun and subdued the Roman empire. They include the prophetical foreshadowing of the rise of the papacy in this time of general anarchy and confusion. Its imperious and insolent sway throughout the darkness of the middle ages, and its deadly wound and incipient decline by the hand of Luther, when light began again to revisit the earth.

On the sounding of the sixth trumpet, "there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell," signifying the disruption of the protestant states from the universal tyranny of Rome. As the seventh seal issued in, and embraced all the time of the seven trumpets, so does the seventh trumpet issue in, and embrace the entire period of the seven vials. The seven vials have reference to the contests subsequent to the Reformation, for the breaking down of the strongholds of Satan in the organizations of Church and State, and for the establishment of the kingdom

under the dominion of Christ our King,—the King of kings and the Lord of lords. "And when the seventh trumpet sounded, I heard a voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth." This contest with the world for the crown-rights of the Redeemer, must continue until he has put all his enemies under his feet, Papal, Pagan, and Mahommedan, and taken to himself the nations for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. On the pouring out of the seventh and last vial, the mystery of God shall be finished, and there come a voice (we read) out of heaven saying, "*It is done.*" And "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluiah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." And "the kingdom, and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heavens, shall be given to the *people* of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him."

Thus it will be seen that the great consummation realises the dreams of the socialist and the hopes of the philanthropist, so far as these are holy, and just, and good. "The kingdom, and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people," not, however, until the people shall have given themselves to God. The Church constituted on Scripture principles is the instrument designed by God himself for the conver-

sion and ingathering of his people, which, by assimilation and incorporation, plucking one brand after another from the burning, is to leaven the outlying mass of mankind in the midst of which it is placed, and to ensure the safety and the glory of all whom the Lord has appointed to be saved. It is destined to establish throughout the world the liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free; the fraternity which is the bond of perfectness, and the equality which results from the abundance of one supplying the deficiency of the other in the things alike which are spiritual and material. As the individual saint is formed after the similitude of Christ, having been changed into the same image from glory to glory, so should every particular organisation of Christians exemplify in epitome that kingdom which is peace, and righteousness, and joy in the Holy Ghost, into which nothing is permitted to intrude that defileth, or that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, and rising from individuals to the whole, from saints, and congregations, and denominations, circle within circle of the divine institution, the universal church will in the end be completed without spot or blemish, as the body of him which filleth all in all. The cloudy pillar is already departing to the rear, and the pillar of fire becoming visible in the van. "Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward," is the commandment now distinctly sounding in our ears.

The Church of Christ has been symbolised in Scripture by an army with banners—the infantry,

cavalry, and artillery together, each with its captains over thousands, its captains over hundreds, and its captains over tens. It has been compared to the human body, with its admirable variety of parts, yet by subjection to one will so forming one harmonious whole, that the eye cannot say to the ear, I have no need of thee, nor the hand to the foot, I have no need of thee. It has been compared to a sheepfold. Those who are acquainted with the arrangements of a pastoral country need not be told that a sheepfold is not one open quadrilateral throughout; it is divided into separate compartments, wherein are secured, in the one sheepfold (separate and apart), the different races, objects of the watchful solicitude of the chief shepherd's care. There is no such thing in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, as a dull uniformity. Unity in variety characterises all the works of the great Creator; and we may be assured that, so long as the present order of things exists, wherever there is liberty in the moral world, that there also will be variety. Variety does not, however, necessitate antagonism in strife. Look at the beauty of the variegated parterre, which, smiling in the sunbeams, sends up its common fragrance into heaven; or at the well cultivated garden in which we find a variety of fruits and flowers, pleasing to the eye and grateful to the taste, growing out of the same soil, watered by the same dews of heaven, and enlivened and enlightened by the one resplendent orb of day, each appropriating to itself, assimilating and incorporating out of the

common aliment, the elemental particles which are most congenial to its constitution, most conformable to its nature, and most conducive to its health—herbs, and fruits, and flowers, in one united incense ascending—

> "In mingled clouds, to Him whose sun exalts,
> Whose breath perfumes them, and whose pencil paints."

And though one star also excels another star in glory, yet the combined music of the spheres attunes the praises of the great Creator. "Their line is gone through all the earth, their words to the world's end." Separate organisations in the Church seem to be according to the order of nature and of nature's God; and were the love of Christ to constrain them all, like the centripetal and the centrifugal forces in the physical universe, which in their whirling vortices and circling spheres preserve the stars in their courses, the unity of the Christian Church would be preserved in all the varieties of every nation, and people, and tongue, the centrifugal forces of rivalries and selfish preferences being counterbalanced by the centripetal influence of the love of Christ.

The intestine contentions and internecine strife of the evangelical host is the work of the adversary, pursuing with obdurate pride and steadfast hate his vengeful purpose, ingeniously and perseveringly turning out of its course the Christian system. And, placing every principle of virtue upon a false foundation, he has led by his glosses and specious arguments the Christian Churches to expend against one

another the zeal and the energy which ought to have been directed against the common foe, and in the vain struggle to proselytise from one another, to neglect their high calling of making converts from the world, insomuch so, that since the great victory of the Reformation, the boundaries of the Redeemer's kingdom have not been enlarged. It is as if the armament sent forth to India, the land of the sun, by our gracious sovereign the Queen, had turned from the purpose of their mission, which was to subdue under her the rebels from her authority, and in discord and petty jealousies and contentions, had drawn the sword for mutual destruction—the cavalry against the infantry, and the infantry against the cavalry; the artillery and household brigade, the Rifles, and the lancers, in admirable confusion, scrambling and squabbling for supremacy. But they knew the better way, and they acted the better part—though rivalries exist among them, and jealousies, and selfish preferences, they were all subordinated to the sense of duty and of fidelity to the sovereign, the *esprit de corps* serving only to combine in a closer union and fellowship the component parts of the several sections of the united host, while these all found their vent and exercise in a generous rivalry for distinction on the battle-field, side by side together, and a noble emulation in the discharge of duty.

There is no fight in which the soldier can engage with such certainty of success as in the good fight of the faith. To the soldier of the cross, victory is

certain; the triumph has been promised to his leader by the Omnipotent himself, by him who does all things according to the counsel of his own will. We have heard how that the eye of the dying soldier has been seen to glisten when the shout of victory had reached his ears; and how the breathing of the dying soldier has been heard to leave him, cheering his surviving comrades in faint huzzas. But to the dying Christian it is given to rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory, far above all these, seeing that success is certain, and that death itself is to him but the passage to a life where he will himself share in the triumph of the conqueror, and be a partaker of the benefits of the conquest.

"Who sees all this, and does not long for the day yet to be revealed on earth, when the long agony of ages shall be over, when the new state of society shall be organised which John saw descending from God out of heaven, when the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God?" Let us, therefore, be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

CHAPTER II.

THE PLANTING OF THE CHURCH.

CHRISTIANITY appeared at first in the one hundred and twenty disciples who assembled themselves along with the apostles, with one accord, for prayer and supplication. The infant Church, like the created universe itself at the beginning, was without form; that is, without any visible organisation or mutual dependency of parts; it was simply a company of men filled with the Holy Ghost, in which there was neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, but all one in Christ Jesus, every one of them being a θεοφορος, a godbearer as well as another.

Liberty, equality, fraternity, characterised this primary assembly of Christians; the apostles themselves descended from their high estate, and denuded themselves of the pre-eminence which the possession of supernatural gifts might be supposed to confer, and in the congregation of the brethren took their seats upon the common platform. This venerable assembly proceeded to elect by common suffrage, from among those who accompanied with the apostles, all the time that the Lord Jesus went out and in amongst

them, a successor to Judas the traitor who had gone to his place.

Though the apostles were there, whom the Lord Jesus had so fully commissioned and endowed as to certify, "That he who receiveth you receiveth me;" though many of the seventy were there whom he had sent forth to preach the gospel; though the beloved disciple was there, of whom he said, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" yet, notwithstanding, in this assembly of all that was greatest, and wisest, and best in the Church, the voice of the least and the last amongst them was of equal weight and value, for once admitted into the sacred confraternity, there is no difference: "One is your master, even Christ, and ye are all brethren." The Church is primarily, and before it is anything else, simply a communion of saints, the original terms of discipleship being, *believe* and *obey*, or "One is your master, even Christ," and the communion of saints is based on the condition, "Ye are all brethren." This short declaration strikes at the root of the two most rampant of our carnal affections—selfishness and pride. It peculiarly affects the haughty and the eminent, the cedars of Lebanon and the oaks of Bashan. By it the lofty looks of man are humbled, and the haughtiness of man is bowed down; by it the weak are made strong, the poor rich, and the man of low degree is exalted; by it shall be brought to pass that which is written, "Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be abased, and the crooked

shall be made straight, and the rough places shall be made smooth, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it."

As Christ is coming, and as the lapse of time and the signs of the times indicate his near approach, we had need to abandon all airy speculations, and betake ourselves to the practical work of setting his house, which is the Church, in order, getting all things ready for his second advent, according to the letter of his instructions and the pattern of his life.

We have found that, in the first congregation of the disciples of our Lord, the apostles, abandoning all hierarchical pretensions, which cut away the root from congregational life, left the important question of filling up the vacancy in the apostolic college to be determined by the equal and universal suffrage of the disciples. The true religion thus inaugurating at the very beginning the era of equal rights, on every subsequent occasion recorded in the scriptures of truth, the apostles, for our edification, manifested a like delicacy of conduct. We read, that when there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations, the matter was not settled by the authoritative decision of the apostles. "Look out (say they) among yourselves seven men of honest report, whom we may appoint over this business." The assembly is described as vested with the power of election, the apostles with the office of ordaining. Again—the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the infant

Church at Corinth, adverting to a scandal that had arisen from the misconduct of an individual member of that Church, does not of his own authority excommunicate or expel the offender. "In the name of the Lord Jesus (says he), when ye are gathered together, expel from among yourselves this wicked person." The apostles cherished the infant Church, even as a nurse cherisheth her children, encouraging and enticing her to put forth her own strength, and to depend upon her own resources. "Now concerning the collection for the saints (says St. Paul), Upon the first day of the week let every one lay up by him in store as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come; and whomsoever YE shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality to Jerusalem." Examples of this kind might be multiplied from the canonical epistles which were addressed to the Churches, as to assemblies in which authority was vested, and over which no one claimed supremacy or right of dictation. Nay, more—our Lord himself gave the same solemn assurances to the Church, that their decisions would be ratified in heaven, which he gave to Peter as an individual, and of which priests who claim descent from Peter have made so much in all ages. "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

We do not find in Scripture any formal plan of church government. What we do find in Scripture

is the express principle, by the operation of which each congregation of Christians can develope its organization to suit the requirements of time and place. The central or cardinal doctrine of the Christian religion, around which all the other doctrines cluster and converge, is "Justification by Faith." "Believe in the Lord Jesus and thou shall be saved;" and the central or cardinal doctrine of the Church's organization is, "Ye are all brethren." Every church is radically correct in doctrine which accepts, in its integrity, the doctrine of Justification; and every church is radically right in her organization, which is the resultant of the principle of equality, the expression of the free will of the members. The kingdom of God (which is the Church) embraces all in every place to whom it is given to believe that Christ Jesus "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." And the visible Church comprehends within her ample periphery every organization which is the development of the free and unfettered will of the members—*these members being the members of Christ*—whatever be the form and fashion it assumes.

The Christian man, renewed into knowledge, after the image of him that created him, is the miracle of grace; the mystery lies in the regeneration of the heart to God; in the acceptation by faith of those doctrines which are undiscoverable by human reason, and which "the natural man cannot receive, because they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." In the

construction of the ecclesiastical fabric, there is no marvel nor mystery whatsoever; it is but the common sentiment receiving a corresponding visible expression, —the man reconciled to God in Christ Jesus is the miracle,—the assigning the right man to the right place is an act which, when the eye is single and the heart sincere, lies not beyond the common grasp of the human intellect. As in the material world, though it needed a miracle at the first to call into existence the various substances employed in the art of the architect, it needs no miracle, beyond the exercise of the natural faculties, to build them up into a palace, fit for the habitation of a prince.

It was the intense common life of the small republics of antiquity, which, permeating the entire body corporate throughout, made every citizen to feel his own individual influence and responsibility, and enabling him to make his influence felt in the proceedings of the state of which he was a member, that rendered them capable of acting so conspicuous a part in the arena of the world. And it will only be when, by the manifestation of a faith working by love, the Church of Christ exhibits to the world liberty, equality, fraternity, the visible embodiment of justice and mercy, love and sympathy, when her seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and her offspring among the people, when all that see them shall acknowledge them as the seed which the Lord has blessed, and wonder and admire, as of old, "how these Christians love one another." It will only then be, that, accord-

ing to the promise, the abundance of the sea shall be converted to the Church, that the forces of the Gentiles shall come into her, that the Gentiles shall come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising.

To attract, the Church must become attractive, the true doctrine must be enshrined in a perfect form. The "*mens sana in corpore sano*," which is the perfection of humanity, must be exhibited before the world in the mystical body. The purity, and peace, and power of the Church depend on its organization, by the exhibition of the true doctrine enshrined in a perfect form, the Church will become "beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, and terrible as an army with banners." "How beautiful would be the spectacle of such a Church, the members of which rejoice in one another's joy, and grieve in one another's griefs, in which the poor find a home, in which their ignorance is instructed, their wants relieved, and all the hardships of their natural condition alleviated. How vigorous would be the movements of such a church, how commanding her influence; the most careless would be constrained to acknowledge the presence and the power of God, and to exclaim, in delightful wonder, with the hireling prophet of old, 'How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel. Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.'"

In modern times we have not, perhaps, a more illustrative example of apostolic Christianity, in its ecclesiastical development, than that furnished by the

Reformer Knox, in his History of the Origin of the Evangelical Church of Scotland. "Before there was any face of the true religion (says he) within the realm, it pleased God of his mercy to illuminate the hearts of many private persons, so that they did perceive and understand the abuses that were in the papistical church, and thereupon they withdrew themselves from participation in its idolatries; and because the Spirit of God will not suffer his own to be idle, and void of all religion, men began to exercise themselves in reading the Scriptures secretly within their own houses, and thereunto were added prayers within houses publicly made. After short process of time, God gathered houses together in one house to the same exercises, sometimes in field, and sometimes in dwellings by night; and then men began, no doubt inspired by the Spirit of God, to consider that diverse houses and varieties of persons could not be kept in good obedience and honest fame, without overseers, and elders, and deacons, and so began that small flock to put themselves in such order as if the Spirit of Jesus had plainly triumphed in the midst of them by the power of the evangel; and so they did elect some to occupy the supreme place of exhortation and reading, some to be elders and helpers of them, for the oversight of the *flock*, and some to be deacons, for the collecting of alms to be distributed to the poor of their body."

The equality of the brethren was the start-point of the organization, the assembled brethren concluding, that the body possessed the inalienable right to the

services which every member of the body was capable of rendering to it, assigned, by general consent and suffrage, the place of the individual in the general organization. "All saints (says the Westminster Confession) have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to perform such duties, public and private, as conduce to their mutual good, both inward and outward." It is certain that men have all the faculties which, if rightly directed, would enable them to benefit and to bless each other, every man having his own proper gift of God, one after this manner and another after that. The world never saw but one character in whom was centred all the varieties of intellectual and moral greatness. No individual man can represent the similitude of the Saviour in the totality of his perfections; but we rejoice to know, that to every man is given his own proper gift to profit with all, and that by the mutual help of one another, the one supplying what the other lacks, the Church of Christ shall be brought, through the intellectual and moral endowments of its members, sanctified by divine grace, to represent the moral image of him whose representative it is here upon the earth. The Christian Church, according to the Scriptures, is built up of sanctified individuals, of men in whom every faculty and power has been harmonized, and subjugated to the obedience of Christ; the Church members being restricted to those who make a profession of belief in the things which Jesus has revealed, and who practise in their lives the things which Jesus has com-

manded. In a congregation of such believers there is a magazine of spiritual faculties, of apostolic virtues, of Christian graces, of precious experiences in all questions of life and godliness, combined with a practical shrewdness and dexterity which can amply supply the necessities of the congregation for the conservation of an inward holiness, and the prosecution of a diffusive usefulness, "each holding the head, from which the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, increaseth with the increase of God."

The Christian parity of the members of the congregation is not intended to exhibit a melee of independent and privileged individuals, but an organised community, well ordered in all things, and sure; a voice in the conduct of affairs is to elicit the energy and enterprise of each of the members, and every Christian work done by every Christian member of the body is to appertain to and be profitable unto all. Think not that personal obligation may be evaded by reason of organisation, or that moral obligations may be transferred, or that the duties which the New Testament imposes may be negligently or vicariously performed; on the contrary, the organisations are formed to strengthen our hands and to encourage our hearts to persevere without wavering in the performance, individually, of the duties which we owe to our Creator, and to our Redeemer, and to our fellow-men. The Christian man is instructed to associate himself with his fellow-Christians, for the double purpose of stirring up the gift that is in him, and, by mutual

giving and receiving, to increase the fruits of his own righteousness, and to minister to the necessities of his brethren. We all know the persuasive powers of example; we know that union is strength and isolation weakness; we have felt the mutual dependency produced by mutual infirmities, and the mutual love elicited by mutual help. It is by this care of the members for one another, by this sanctified oversight and holy fellowship, by this rivalry of love, that the Church will be brought to manifest that beautiful congruity of qualities which characterised the founder of Christianity, and by which it is his pleasure that his mystical body should exhibit a resemblance to himself. John Wesley being once asked by what magic he had rendered his followers so efficient, is said to have replied, that the great secret consisted in this, that there was something found for every one to do, and such was the system of responsibility, that they had to do it. There is a terrible significancy of moral depravity in the reply of the first murderer—"*Am I my brother's keeper?*"—when the divine voice inquired, "Where is your brother Abel?"

We find that in the political world, time is gradually reducing the steps which separate the rulers and the ruled. We believe democracy to be in fact the natural state of society, to which, therefore, society is perpetually and universally tending. Dominion, being an usurpation which is contrary to the natural liberty, equality, and fraternity of mankind, can only be maintained by violence, by the strong hand of power; but

every step to a complete equality is an advance in the natural order of things, and needs no external power to ensure its acceptance. But, until men are enlightened to the knowledge of the "truth," and taught by obedience in the love of it to subdue and regulate the tumultuous thoughts and selfish and carnal desires which arise and battle within them, and to comprehend and experience that true self love and social are the same, unlimited freedom would only give rise to universal anarchy; God has therefore, in great mercy, ordained the powers that be for the protection of person and property. But were Christianity to prevail, and were the Church and State to become identical, there would be no disposition to injure the one, or to invade the other; the laws formed for the lawless and disorderly would have no power and no meaning, because men would not then be under law, but under grace. The Church of Christ was constituted to bring about this consummation, to exhibit the spectacle of a society prosperous and happy, free and equal, full of love, and joy, and peace, a centre of attraction, an imperium in imperio, a kingdom of righteousness in the midst of abounding iniquity, incessantly enlarging its borders, plucking one branch after another from the burning and uniting it to itself, until at length, by assimilation and incorporation, the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdom of Christ, and he shall reign for ever.

May thy kingdom come, O God, and may thy will speedily be done on earth as it is done in Heaven!

CHAPTER III.

THE CORRUPTION OF THE CHURCH.

THE mystery of iniquity, by which the Christian scheme has been perverted and the establishment of the Christian Church retarded,—of that republic truly democratic and social which is promised to the latter days, began to work even in apostolic times. Ambition, which broke the peace of heaven, and by which the angels fell, broke the unity of the Church upon the earth, and introduced into the sacred assembly the disintegrating and unsocial affections which brought death into our world, and all its woe. The earliest recorded difference among the disciples was on the subject of precedence: "For by the way they had disputed among themselves who should be the greatest." The dissevering influence of ambition struggling for supremacy within the Church, pursued its own purpose with such obdurate pride and steadfast hate, that the "*odium theologicum*" has become proverbial throughout the world for its bitterness, and the ambition of churchmen, with the profession of humility on their lips, scandalous even to the honourably-minded men of the world.

It is needless to say what might now have been

the state of the Church and of the world, eighteen hundred years after the perfect pattern was exhibited for our imitation, had the professing disciples of our Lord continued steadfast in the apostolic doctrine and fellowship. But alas! like as a diamond of the first water is encrusted with the rude and worthless materials of the matrix wherein it is formed, so was this perfect chrysolite, this pearl of great price, placed in the midst of a world lying in wickedness, speedily obscured and defiled by the aggregation of the carnally-minded and disobedient, who had no part nor lot in the matter. It is humiliating to confess that, in a wonderful and lamentably short space of time, "the Holy City became a harlot" by the admission of the profane and ungodly into the communion of the saints. All the hatreds and malice, the ambitions and the jealousies, the contentions and strifes which distract the world, found their way in rank luxuriance into that institution, which, as the mystical body of Christ, should exhibit to the world union and unanimity, peace and joy, devotedness of soul, and dedication of person, of influence and of wealth, to the service of charity. The Church which was instituted to exhibit peace on earth, and to introduce an universal righteousness, which was placed as a rock in the midst of the ocean, steadfast and immoveable, towering above the rage of the billows, eternal sunshine resting on her head, while storms and discord roll and roar around her; or like an oasis in the desert, full of sap and flourishing, verdant and fruitful amidst

desolation and despair; or like sheep among wolves, holy, harmless, and undefiled, amidst the sensual and rapacious multitude. That Church, the bodily representation of love—the incarnation of mercy—has got, by the traitors within her bosom, pervaded with all the pernicious affections, carnal desires, and selfish preferences, the ambitions and emulations of the world. Her worst enemies are the men of her own house. Jesus comes to his own, and his own receive him not!

False humility, indeed, and thoughtless and senseless admiration, have shared largely in the production of this evil which we deplore. Some of old called themselves of Paul, and some of Apollos, and some of Cephas, as now they do of Luther, Calvin, Whitfield, Wesley, and other lesser luminaries, small by degrees, and so despicably less, that it becomes an excess of humility even in the hero-worshipper to prostrate himself before them. No tyrannical domination has ever existed either in the Church or in the world, for which the voluntary and faulty submissiveness of the people was not in part at least to blame. Gulliver must lay himself on the ground ere the Lilliputians can bind him, but when once bound down by their gossamer threads, line upon line, multiplied without number, and intertwined and interlaced without end, he may find it no easy matter to get up again.

The commendable love and reverence which Christian people bear to their faithful pastors, were the sentiments by the perversion of which were fabricated

the germs of the great apostacy. The greatest evils which have afflicted humanity have ever been introduced under the semblance of good. Errors to be dangerous must have a great deal of truth mingled with them always; the wily deceiver, for the furtherance of his purposes, must clothe himself in a garment of light. Appearing in this garb, however, in the primitive Church, the "mystery of iniquity" did not escape the clear-sighted eye of the Apostle Paul, who indignantly rejected the idolatrous incense of a grateful and admiring people. "What (said he), is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptised in the name of Paul?"

It is remarkable with what variety of expression, with what diversity of symbol, with what changes of parable, the Lord himself endeavoured to impress upon the minds of his followers the great and precious truth which lies at the foundation of the Church, visible and invisible—of faith and of practice: "One is your Master, even Christ, and ye are all brethren." From the moment the liberty, equality, and fraternity of the gospel were infringed, by the professing people of God becoming the followers of men of like passions with themselves, and receiving upon authority doctrines and precepts which it was their duty to examine and authenticate by revelation light, so that they might not only believe with the heart, but believe with the understanding also, and become fully persuaded in their own minds, from that moment religion became as it were the exclusive domain of the

clergy—a sacred deposit which they alone possessed, and alone had the privilege and power to bestow. The consequence of the impression of the greater sanctification of the clergy, very soon became apparent in the neglect of his own sacred character by the layman, and in his disrelish and disregard of his own ministerial duties. As the barriers which hedged in the clergy were strengthened, those which hedged in the Christian people were effaced, until at length such a flood of ignorance and ungodliness found an entrance within the precincts of the Christian Church, that all distinction was obliterated between the Church and the world. The boar out of the wood wasted it, and the wild beast out of the field devoured it. Why hast thou broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts, and behold and visit this vine, and the vineyard which thy right hand has planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself."

When the false humility of some, the exaggerated admiration of others, and the apathy and indifference of more, had elevated one class so much above their fellows, and enabled it, by active aid and by passive non-resistance, to usurp and appropriate the kingly and priestly offices which alike appertained to all the members of the community, these thieves and robbers, as had been predicted of them, conspired together to render permanent the ascendancy of their order, with a devilish ingenuity and superhuman policy and craft.

Now was conceived the figment of the apostolic succession, the antiscriptural doctrine of baptismal regeneration, the magic spell of the sacraments "*ex opere operato*" of the priests. Now, ascending in a climax of blasphemous assumptions, the simplicity of the gospel was exchanged for a complicated ritual, and its godly sincerity for artifice and deceit; not content with dominion over the Lord's heritage upon earth, these wolves in sheep's clothing arrogated to themselves the possession of the keys of heaven, with absolute power to open and to shut, usurping thus the chiefest prerogative of the Saviour, who openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth. In the plenitude of these ample possessions they forgave sins, and cancelled our debts to the Almighty; that which required the costly blood of Christ to expiate, the covetous and avaricious priests expunged for filthy lucre, and daily sold the blood of the Lord for less than it was valued at by the traitor Judas. Having thus done despite to the grace of God, and rendered of none effect the passion of our Lord, these infatuated men, under the strong delusion that overshadowed them, threw contempt upon the person of the Redeemer—the incarnation of the living God—and professed, by a few words of magical effect, pronounced by any one belonging to the order, to change bread from the oven into the very blood, body, and divinity of the Lord. The greatest demand ever made on the credulity of man, and the most blasphemous assertion of human folly, was this claim

to re-create at will the body of our Lord, for the purpose of putting him to an open shame, by the sacrifice day by day, continually, of that body which was offered up on Calvary, once for all and for ever, for our sins. The conversion of bread into the body of Christ became the keystone of the arch of this iniquitous folly—the corner stone of the edifice. As the true Christ is the corner stone of the true Christian Church, so did this fabricated and fictitious Christ become the chief of the corner of the false—the church of antichrist; and truly it might well become so, for to them who possessed the power to call their God at will in bodily presence before them, and to convert a worthless wafer into the soul, body, and blood of the divine Saviour, no other power they might choose to arrogate could be reasonably denied. Transubstantiation became the test of Church membership, and the avowal of this doctrine was taken for the acceptance of the entire creed.

The mind of the professing people of Christ —of those who called themselves by his name— having been deluded and degraded into obedience to the priesthood by a voluntary humility; he by whom the whole of this antichristian scheme was fabricated ingeniously provided, in the organised polity of Rome, a system to render permanent, by despotic and irresponsible power, that which was obtained by craft and subtlety, and all the deceivableness of unrighteousness. This masterpiece of Satan's workmanship did not start at once, Minerva like, from out of the

head of its great contriver, complete in all its panoply of hellish devices; it unveiled its grim and dismal features as men were tutored and prepared to bear it. Had it arisen suddenly, in all its frightful magnitude, and reared its unblushing front against the light of reason and revelation, men would have been horror-struck at the grossness of the apparition, and have turned their backs upon it in disgust and in dismay; but by so well regulated a progression was it unfolded, shade unperceived so passing into shade of a darker and still darker hue, that when the ultimate grotesque reality was revealed, it neither excited surprise nor indignation. It was not until men's eyes were opened by "reformation" light, that the world began "to wonder after the beast." Separated and exalted above the laity, interest and pride impelled the clergy to make the distinction as palpable and obvious as possible. Churchmen, as separated from the world, were not amenable to the laws of civil society. Churchmen, as dead to the world, were debarred from worldly occupations, but an ample provision was made for them out of the labour of others by the institution of tithes. Churchmen, to preserve their isolation, were forbidden to marry, or to form legitimate family connexions, but, by way of compromise, though that which was honourable and innocent in other men was denied to them, all those atrocious violations of every moral principle and duty, which were damnatory to the multitude, were venial to the priest. Although, also, by the gracious invitation of the gospel, all are welcome to

the blessing it confers, to whom the blessing is welcome, a carnal and dominant priesthood levied for its own aggrandisement a pecuniary payment for the blessings it professed to bestow, and also a pecuniary penalty or penance for the violation or evasion of the duties it was pleased to enjoin. Thus were the coffers of this audacious and avaricious corporation, its engorged but never satisfied maw, filled alike by the faithful and the disobedient, by him that sacrificeth and by him that sacrificeth not.

As the multitude which is not brought to unity is confusion, a gradation of offices and rank amongst themselves was most ingeniously contrived, rising by a gradual succession of steps compactly built together, ascending from the extensive platform of the parochial clergy, until it reached its apex in one universal bishop—the high priest of their profession. To this functionary were ascribed the most blasphemous attributes, and the most extravagant powers. In him were concentrated all the usurped authority of the order, and in him were personified all the corrupt doctrines whereby the church of Rome had deviated from the simplicity and godly sincerity of apostolic times. He was emphatically "The Man of Sin," the incarnation of all the unrighteousness of the Church; "The Mystery of Iniquity," working wickedly in secret with lying miracles and wonders; "The Lawless One," changing times and seasons, and supporting his delusions by presumptuous decrees; "The Antichrist," seated in the temple of God, showing himself that he

is God; "The Son of Perdition," whom, thanks be to God, the Lord will consume with the Spirit of his mouth, and destroy by the brightness of his coming.

As the architect of a buttress or bulwark against the encroachment of the sea protects and strengthens his work by placing beside and beyond it a mingled mass of his most worthless and obdurate materials, so, for the protection of this gorgeous and symmetrical structure from the rude examination and unhallowed touch of the profane, were thrown by the master builder around it masses of materials, half lay and half clerical, monks and friars, Jesuits and anchorites, and other such rubbish, which it were difficult to catalogue and most unprofitable to scrutinise.

The clericy of Rome is the masterpiece of Satan's workmanship, so artfully devised that it flourished in the exact ratio of the decay of vital godliness. As the spirit was departing, the bloated corporation was increasing. It embodied, in a system so strongly and strangely dovetailed together, the usurpation, both of the priestly and prophetical offices of Him who is for ever a priest after the order of Melchezidec, that the intellect of generations, though arrayed against it, and the interests of mankind, though opposed to it, were only able, from time to time, to detach unconnected fragments from the concrete and well compacted mass. It was in the full effulgence of its glory that the great Babylon came up in remembrance before God. It was in the zenith of the power of the incarnation of all wickedness—the man of sin—the son of perdition—

when his enemies were under his feet, when his friends rejoiced over them and made merry, when the witnesses against him had been slain, and all opposition subdued; when rioting in the wantonness of power, and boasting in the greatness of his strength—"Is not this the great Babylon, that I have built for the might of my power, and for the glory of my majesty." While the words were (as it were) in his mouth, so sudden and unexpected came the message, there fell a voice from Heaven, saying, Mene! God has numbered thy kingdom and finished it. Tekel! thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting.

At the time appointed of God (man's extremity being God's opportunity), Luther was commissioned to speak the word with demonstration of the Spirit and with power, for the vindication of the priestly office of Christ, the second of the attributes of our great and glorious Redeemer, and basing his arguments on "justification by faith," he unfolded the pure doctrine of Holy Writ, free from superstition, and from the interested, soul-destroying and man-enslaving additions of men.

Luther laid the axe to the root of the false doctrine only. In proclaiming justification by faith he touched not the Church's organisation, in which the "kingly crown" is enshrined, save with a very gentle hand. That organised institute, that production of fraud and force for the benefit of the office-bearers, was not razed to its foundations, though "Ichabod" was written upon it, and "Tekel" the verdict of the jury,

and "Mene" the sentence of the judge; it was only subjected to such modifications and reconstructions as were necessary for the transference to other hands of the spiritual despotism exercised by the tyrant of the seven hills. As the ecclesiastical edifices of Rome, those monuments of human degradation, and masterpieces of architectural art, were converted into Protestant churches, either by the simple deprivation of some of the most obvious and most obtrusive objects of idolatrous worship, or by the incongruous use of the materials which they furnished for the construction of the churches of the Reformation; the head of a surpliced saint, or of a deified martyr, or the scull and cross-bones of a bishop, decorating and adorning, most superfluously and unsuitably, the plain and simple fabric of a Protestant church, "which unadorned is adorned the most;" so was the assumption of the apostolic succession, which was the germ of the great apostacy, retained in all its arrogance in some of the churches of the Reformation, or only peeped out from the walls of others in the form of the ambassadorial functions of the clergy, a device monstrous and inconsistent with the uniform priestly and ambassadorial character of the universal Christian people, of which, as united with Christ immediately and not mediately, they are all alike partakers.

The limitation of any of the precious promises of Christ, and rich privileges of the gospel, to the office-bearers of the Church, as of divine appointment, is but a shred of the filthy and mysterious web of the

Babylonian enchantress, a portion of that cunningly devised fable which has introduced the heathenish institution of caste into the kingdom of God, and which claims for the clergy, as of divine appointment, all the immunities and dignities which appertain to the members of the new community in common, leaving nothing for the laity save the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. The Church of Rome makes this claim consistently and logically enough, because, according to her teaching, the clergy constitute the Church; but in the evangelical Church, which professes to have broken down this middle wall of partition, the assumption is as inconsistent as it is unscriptural. "If any man (it is written) be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things have passed away, and behold, all things are made new: and all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us (*who are reconciled*) the ministry of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors of Christ (*not any particular individuals by special descent or special appointment from on high, but all the reconciled*) as though God did beseech you (*the unreconciled*) by us (*the reconciled*), be ye reconciled to God." The Scripture doctrine is, that every one who has received the gift is a debtor to him who has not received it, as a good steward of the manifold mercies of God. The reconciled are the debtors of the unreconciled, for God wills that all men should be saved. It is equally the duty of all to commend the gospel of God our Saviour

to their fellow-sinners, as living epistles of Christ, one after this manner and another after that, whether they be lay or clerical. "And the spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, Come. And whosoever will, let him take of the waters of life freely." The duty of testifying for God before an unbelieving world, is a duty which cannot be vicariously, and ought not to be perfunctorily performed; to the efficient and effectual performance of it, God has attached the great recompence of reward, that "they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."

One of the most remarkable and observable characteristics of the great revival of religion, which at this time is attracting the attention of all men, and which, as the doing of the Lord, is marvellous in our eyes, is the special honour conferred on lay agency. In almost every case, the ordinary and ordained ministry have been passed over, and a lay instrumentality employed, as if it were the design of the Omnipotent to show that he is not a respecter of persons, that from the highest to the lowest, from the richest to the poorest, one is their master, even Christ, and they are all brethren—a truth which cannot be too often repeated to this lukewarm and self-seeking generation, which have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof.

Wesleyan lay preaching may be traced to that word, well weighed before it was spoken, by the brother of

Wesley :—"John (said he), this Maxwell is as surely called of God to preach as you are."

The dogmas and the arrangements of the despotic Church of Rome, that enemy of all righteousness, that antithesis of the truth, and parody on its manifestations, were first called in question by some of those within the pale of the privileged; and the multitude accustomed to obey, followed the leading of their spiritual guides. The Reformation at the beginning was mainly effected by apostate priests, and consequently, when the Church, thus torn and rent asunder, came to be reorganised, the professional tendencies and partialities of the leaders were manifested in the form and fashion it assumed. "The form was the form of Esau, but the voice was the voice of Jacob." There was an incongruity between principles and practice; "the flesh lusted against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these two were contrary, the one to the other." "The bed was shorter than a man can stretch himself on it, and the covering narrower than a man can wrap himself in it."

The Roman Catholic system of polity, based on the false assumption that the clergy constituted the Church, was worked with such admirable skill and persistency for many generations, that the predicted domination of the Church over the kingdoms of the world seemed about to be realised by these pseudo saints. "All the world worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?" But when the appointed time had

come, the seeds of dissolution contained in everything that is false began to germinate, first under the influence of the dawn of philosophy and letters, and then under the meridian sun of the open Bible. Wherever the light of reason, which is common sense; or the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, which is Scripture truth, were permitted to shine throughout the whole earth, there were the strongholds of superstition and hypocrisy broken down, and there the Roman Catholic system was compelled either to break or to bend.

The liberty reclaimed for the laity from the Pope and his myrmidons by Luther and his associates, was at first only sufficient to secure the emancipation of the clergy, but by the relaxation of power and privilege, and by the partial admission of the laity into the franchise of the ecclesiastical commonwealth, a spirit was evoked which would not afterwards suffer the laity to be overlooked. Worldly men, wiser in their generation than the children of light, saw with suspicion and alarm the formation of an *imperium in imperio*, because they had not sense or virtue enough to like a free commonwealth in which the wisdom of this world was counted foolishness. They therefore, with that cunning craftiness which lies in wait to deceive, seduced from the paths of rectitude those whom they could not coerce, and by temptations addressed to the human nature of ministers, and of the members of the Church, and by solicitations venal and plausible, gradually brought the Church so en-

tirely under subjection to the state, that she became in reality little better than a religious communion administered by Gentiles; the clergy became corrupt and indifferent amidst indifference and corruption, and among the people morals degenerated, and sceptics multiplied.

In the midst of all the vain janglings, and fierce contentions respecting mystical subtleties among which the great apostacy took its rise, and grew and prospered by darkening counsel by words without knowledge, there was still much faith to be found upon the earth :—

> "Like a sunbeam on the rill,
> Though broken is a sunbeam still."

But in the scene of anarchy and confusion that ensued upon the breaking down the barriers that hedged in the Church, liberty degenerated into licentiousness, and was rendered worse than worthless by the great master of deceit, for the promotion of present holiness or everlasting blessedness, men were seduced to make their own understanding the test of religious truth, and to fall under the temptation into which our first parents fell when they believed the lie, "*Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil*"—a mischievous delusion, which cherishes pride, and selfishness, and inordinate ambition, and which, in shame and confusion of face, causes the head of the saint to bow down like a bulrush.

Under pretence of preserving the entire realm in an unity of faith, the state made offer to charge itself

with the sustentation of the ministers, and the expense of the ordinances. The human nature of the ministers, we have the authority of a celebrated clergyman for saying—from his personal experience, we presume—when brought into contact with money, is just the same as that of other men; with few exceptions they kissed the hand that fed them, and bowed the neck to the yoke of a passive obedience.

When the state made provision for the men who were to officiate in holy things, it seemed reasonable that the laws of the state should regulate the mode of their introduction into their offices, and of the tenure by which these offices were held; thus the very existence of a church established and maintained by the state, put an end within it to all self-government and to all religious freedom; the Church was deprived of its most precious jewel by its connexion with the state—the right of making her own laws, directing her own schools, and managing her own funds, by persons freely elected by herself, and accountable for their stewardship to herself only. Having no elective franchise, and no concern in the public affairs of the Church, the members became indifferent to her progress and prosperity; they came to reckon themselves merely as the individual possessors of a common faith, and not as living, sympathetic members of one body. The communion of saints remained as an article of their creed, but as a practical principle it had lost all influence over their conduct. There was a decay of spiritual religion; men ceased

to speak of Christ to one another, or of Christ to those who knew him not. The celebrated Jewish convert, Dr. Capadose, has declared in his "Confessions," that during the several years previous to his making a public profession of Christianity, he was much more in the society of Christians than of his Jewish brethren, yet that during all that time no person ever spoke a single word to him about Christ or his gospel. The isolation in which Christians stood to one another, gave rise to an universal shyness or awkwardness in speaking for Christ before the world, and by almost general consent the members of the Church militant, seeming, like Simon Magus of old, to think that the gift of God could be purchased by money, and that money could procure substitutes to fight the good fight of the faith, conferred on the stipendiaries of the state—the paid officials—the duty of advocating the cause of Christ and of promoting his glory, while they severally went their own ways, one to his farm and another to his merchandise. "Of all the heresies (says Principal Robertson) that have ever arisen, one of the most fatal has been the distinction that has long been made between the clergy and the laity, leading it to be thought that it was only the function of the clergyman to be interested in the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, instead of its being the duty of every Christian man to do Christ's work to the best of his ability." The scriptural character of the Church was entirely lost sight of, when a distinct class came to monopolise the

active functions of the whole body, and when the members, having become accustomed to let the office-bearers act in everything for them, acquired the imbecility of infancy, and became incapable of action. The result, as exhibited to the world, was not a living, working copartnership—a body of many members actuated by one spirit, and striving for the attainment of one end—but a corpse, helpless and lifeless; the external features of the organisation remaining after the spirit had fled. "'Tis Greece, but living Greece no more;" the semblance without the reality.

Thus was healed the deadly wound which Luther and his coadjutors inflicted on the great apostacy, by the substitution over the freedom of the Christian people of the supremacy of the civil government instead of the supremacy of the Pope. The crown rights of the Redeemer were equally set at naught, and his kingly prerogatives disregarded by the infidel and intermeddling Cæsar, as they were by the arrogant and blaspheming priest. The tone of religion was enervated and emasculated when it became subservient to the civil government, and in its hands a mere engine of police. The growth of a due sense of its varied and inestimable blessings was prevented, by reason of the vicarious services of the state and of the clergy. The vaguest notions on religious matters were suffered to prevail, and Christianity, among even the best of the people, was too much of a sentiment and too little of a work. The established

Church of the land continued in the possession of saving truth, and the doctrine which is according to godliness was professed by most, and believed by many of its members but as a corporate body of believers; it had no reality; it was a church only in appearance and in name; some of the forms of liberty and of community were there, while the substance had perished under the baleful influence of an overweening aristocracy. Its title-deeds lay buried under a rubbish of conventional charters, and were to be found rather in the records of parliament, than in the pages of the Bible.

The first reformation was concerned mainly with the restoration of the Christian doctrines from the audaciously false and shameless perversions of the great antichrist, and only glanced incidentally at the equally false and audacious constitution of the Roman hierarchy. The second reformation (which is now in progress) has mainly to deal with the organisation of the Church, which but very partially occupied the attention of the early reformers. The impious rant of doctrines and theoretic formulas of the sacerdotal religion, received a blow at the Reformation from which it will go halting all the days of its appointed time; but Luther meddled not with the shameless and unlawful inroads on the Christian equality of the brethren, which were based on the arrogant assumption of the apostolic succession, save to the extent necessary to emancipate the clergy from thraldom to the Pope. In virtue of the apostolic succession, or of

the ambassadorial function, (the same thing in another form,) the brotherhood and equality of Christians continues to be repudiated and set at nought, throughout all the sections of the Christian Church. The trail of the filthy serpent, the mark of the beast, remains in a greater or lesser degree of intensity conspicuous upon them all.

There is now, however, thanks to the open Bible which has been reclaimed for the laity, and to the gracious assurance fulfilled in our experience, "that God will not allow his word to return unto him void," a spirit abroad which will not suffer the laity to be overlooked, and which will break up mere professionalism, and close borough legislation both in Church and State. A deep-rooted enmity to caste, which must lead to the reconstruction of society, and which, if directed by the wisdom which cometh from on high, (and for which we are bound to pray,) will terminate in building up the Church after the perfect pattern, full of love and of good works, by a gradual renovation, without any breach in the continuity of its parts.

> "I do confess that I abhor and shrink
> From schemes with a religious willy-nilly,
> That frowns upon St. Giles' sins, but blinks
> The peccadilloes of all Piccadilly."

CHAPTER IV.

THE REFORMATION OF THE CHURCH.

LUTHER laid the axe to the root of the tree of false doctrine, by proclaiming justification by faith. In the light of this glorious truth, the whole popish trumpery of saints, and relics of saints; of holy men and holy oil; of papal penances, and papal indulgences; of transubstantiation and consecration; of purgatory and idolatry, faded away like ghosts and ghouls before the lustre of the noon day sun. The snake, however, was scotched only, and not killed. The assault of Luther was simply on the erroneous and superstitious doctrines of the church, he meddled not with the ecclesiastical constitution of the hierarchy, as it affected the laity, nor with the false and arrogant assumptions whence it took its rise.

After a millennium and a half, from the birth of Jesus to the death of Luther, no organized community of men had received Christ in all his gracious and glorious attributes, of Prophet, Priest, and King. We thank God it is true, that in all ages, from the beginning of the Revelation, individuals have been found to accept Christ, freely and fully as he is offered to us

in the gospel; that neither the chimeras of paganism, nor the delusions of Mahommedanism, nor the treacherous deceit of Romanism, nor the scornful folly of infidelity, had at any time left God without witnesses to the faithfulness of the word, and to the glory of his majesty. But Christ, to whom the heathen had been promised for an inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for a possession, whose kingdom was to rule over all, had never seen of the travail of his soul, in the subjugation to his will of any society, civil or ecclesiastical. Men had nowhere yet, in a corporate capacity, recognised Christ in his kingly office, nor bowed before his sovereign authority, either in their ecclesiastical, or political, or civil, or social arrangements. Views of secular expediency, of selfish interests, of relative fitness in the estimation of carnal reasoning, and of a false philosophy, continued universally to determine the conduct of men, rather than a simple, implicit, unquestioned, child-like obedience to the precepts of the gospel.

It was the desire of the amiable and gentle Melancthon, that religion might be reformed without any public schism, and that the visible brotherhood of Christians might remain entire,—a thing impossible in his time, seeing that the root of the matter was unsound, and that the work to be done was, OVERTURN, OVERTURN, OVERTURN, root and branch together, for if the root be corrupt, the branches must also be corrupt. But since the mission of Luther, of Calvin, Bucer, Zwinglius, and others, has promulgated the doctrine

of justification by faith, free from superstition, the obstacle to reform without schism, among those who have accepted this doctrine of justification, is altogether taken away. The root is holy, and so also are the branches. There is no difference of opinion among Evangelical Christians on any essential point of doctrine; they all believe in the unity of the Godhead, and the Trinity of persons therein.

In the utter depravity of human nature in consequence of the fall.

In the incarnation of the Son of God, his work of atonement for sinners, and his mediatorial intercession and reign.

In the justification of sinners by faith alone. And,

In the work of the Holy Spirit, in the conversion and sanctification of the sinner.

The immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, the judgment of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, with the eternal blessedness of the righteous, and the eternal punishment of the wicked, are all so clearly and explicitly revealed in the Bible, that wherever the right of private judgment is allowed or exercised, there is no difference of opinion regarding them, unless it be among those self-conceited visionaries, who, turning their liberty into licentiousness, would be wise beyond what is written, and who, like ships on the trackless ocean, without compass or rudder, "are tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine," until, wearied and bewildered, they are at length glad to surrender liberty and reason for repose in the

treacherous haven of the infallible church; or, "like raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame;" or, "like wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever," they sink down into the dismal gulph of a cheerless infidelity.

Union and communion are principles of the faith of the Christian,—the union of all who walk by the same rule, and who mind the same thing; and communion with all who differ only in circumstantials, while on essentials they are at one, "having the same Lord, the same faith, the same baptism." No doubt, it is possible that the religion of Christ may work its full work on an individual living alone, or living among unbelievers and ungodly men (and we thank God for many who, under such circumstances, have been burning and shining lights in their day and generation,) but the design of God is to build up of these lively stones a spiritual house, an organised association framed with a view to spiritual results. The design of God in imparting grace to the heart is not only to save the individual, but also to render him an instrument for the salvation of others. "In blessing to make him a blessing," and to confer on him, as a member of the body of Christ, the high privilege of working together with Christ, and together with his fellow-soldiers and fellow-servants, (who have the testimony of Jesus,) for that restitution of all things which God has spoken of by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. Leaving, therefore, the principles of the doctrine of Christ, which have been

elicited and accepted by the Protestant Churches, the time has now come when the Churches should go on unto perfection, and ingather and incorporate out of every nation, and people, and tongue, those whom God has appointed to be saved, until the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose.

The Church of Christ delineated in the gospel is an organisation of sanctified believers, a living organisation (*not a mass of disunited atoms*) of different parts with different functions, combined into an organic unity so intimate, that whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it; an instrument which contains within itself all that is necessary for preservation, for attraction, for aggression. The cause of the little progress hitherto made in the holy warfare of subduing the world unto Christ, and gathering his saints into one, is, that instead of perfecting the Church according to the Scriptures, and using her as our instrument of attraction and attack, we have been wandering on the mountains of vanity, after every vain imagination of our own hearts.

The Church of Christ is the representative of Christ upon the earth, the visible and tangible body of Him whose fulness filleth all in all. The individual man regenerated into righteousness by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, irrespective of class or condition, with all his faculties subdued into the obedience of Christ, and united into one instrument of usefulness

in his free and holy service, is an epitome of the Church, which is formed by the union and communion of such disciples, like to like, through all the varieties of every kindred, and nation, and tongue; to the end that they who are individually and inwardly holy, may, by union and communion with others, become more extensively and diffusively useful.

In union with others, however, individual freedom is preserved, and personal responsibilities are inviolate—a door of egress being at all times open by which he who will depart may depart without let or hindrance.

Baptism is the initiatory rite of admission into the Church universal, which comprehends the Church visible and invisible. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." No one is entitled to repel from the fountain of living waters any professing believer, or to deny water that he should not be baptised. We judge not in this matter, lest we be judged, "the Lord knoweth them that are his," but are bound to administer the rite of baptism to every one that professes to believe.

"Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch on the bare profession of his faith. "Repent and be baptized every one of you (said Peter) in the name of the Lord Jesus, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost; and there were added to the Church (before they could

have manifested by the fruits of righteousness the sincerity of their profession) three thousand souls." The responsibility is on the head of him who makes the profession, and not on the head of him who administers the rite. The tares are permitted to grow with the wheat until the time of harvest, lest men, in rooting out the tares, should root out the wheat along with them. To this liberality and long-suffering patience, we are indebted for the Christendom which has conferred many benefits upon the world at large, which is the abode of intelligence and civilisation, and which furnishes materials half-wrought for the construction of the visible Church upon the earth, the rite of admission into which is not baptism, but the sacrament of the Lord's Supper—that communion or common participation of the body and blood of Christ, represented in the emblems of bread and wine, by which we, being many, become one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread. In the one case the transaction is between the individual and his God. The Lord knoweth them that are his: "He that *believeth* and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." But in the other—in the constituting of the visible Church on earth—we judge not so much by the profession of the lips, as by the outward walk and conversation; the transaction is between man and man, and while the Lord searches the heart, and tries the reins of the children of men, it is the duty of man to scrutinise the outward con-

duct, which is the criterion of judgment given to him, and to require that the credible profession be authenticated by the creditable practice, which shall bring no reproach on the corporate body, on its common profession, or on the holy name wherewith it is called. "He that believeth on me, (says Jesus,) out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." These visible emanations of the faith working by love, these appropriate fruits of righteousness which refresh God's heritage, are the credentials which we are entitled to demand of him who seeks to have fellowship with us, who truly have our "fellowship with God and with his Son Jesus Christ."

The scrupulosity with which the Protestant Churches administer the rite of baptism to the professing converts from heathenism, has, we doubt not, very greatly retarded the progress of Christianity in heathen lands. The bare public profession of Christianity separates the professor from the idolater, and from all actual and open participation in idolatry; it breaks down the wall of partition between him and the followers of Jesus, and removes the obstacle to the training of his household in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. As of old, they were not all Israelites who were of Israel; so now they are not all Christians who call themselves by that blessed name. But the hypocrisy of the professor is a homage which vice pays to virtue—which falsehood pays to truth. It is the acknowledgment that the enemies

of Christ are made his footstool, and that his foes have been subdued under him.

As the liberty of the individual man is preserved by the open door of egress, so the integrity of the community is secured by the right or power of expulsion; this power of expulsion, for the punishment of evil-doers, is to the Church what the power of the sword is to the civil magistrate.

The ecclesiastical constitution, based on the principle of voluntary compact, needs not the authority or sanction of the civil power. Armed with the inherent power of expulsion—a power which man neither gave nor can take away—the Church may, without stretching herself beyond her measure, purge herself of everything that would sully or defile her, and purify herself from all things which might disgrace or bring discredit on her Christian profession, until her righteousness going forth as brightness, she shines so conspicuously in contrast with the darkness of the world, that men shall be constrained to take knowledge of the upright lives, and honest dealings, and unblemished conduct of the associated disciples, and to accept, to the credit of Christianity, Church membership as a sufficient certificate of character for all the multiform concerns of life.

As a society self-containing and self-developing—every individual atom which enters into its composition being instinct with life—the Church, through her own constitutional powers, under the guidance of

the Holy Ghost, organises herself, and assigns to each individual whom she takes into communion, the place he is to occupy in the body corporate, just as the alimentary elements which are collected from without are, by the vital powers of our natural bodies, distributed among the members, like to like, according to the affinities and necessities of each respectively. The members of the Church are all of them endowed with special gifts and graces, some with few and some with many—some with great and some with small—some after this manner and some after that—by Him who cares so well for the prosperity of his Church, as always to provide means adequate to the supply of the wants of his people, and agents with an aptitude to carry on every part of his work. All that is needed to secure the prosperity of the body corporate, and the recompence of the reward to the individual, is that the gifts conferred upon him be honestly employed in the service of the giver, so that the Lord Jesus at his coming may receive his own with usury.

The Lord Jesus created a new thing upon the earth when he instituted the Church, of which he is the head. He formed his followers into a community mutually dependent on one another, each member of which was to benefit by the good offices of the rest—an organised community having life in itself, different in principles, different in purposes, different in form from any of the organisations of the world. As King and Head of the Church, he appointed therein a

government or form of organisation, a mutual dependency of posts, distinct from and irrespective of the civil magistrate; a government of volition, instead of a government of coercion; governors by election, instead of governors by nomination or succession: the sword of iron, which breaketh in pieces all things, being superseded by the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. The whole community is raised to a higher moral and intellectual platform, by each member having a voice in the election of the men of office; subjection becomes a voluntary service and a willing tribute, when the rulers are nominated by the subjects of the government; the people are then, in fact, the sovereigns, and the chiefs among them are the servants of all.

The Church is a social republic, which, though it gives equal scope to unequal faculties, is especially organised to prevent the inequalities of nature and of circumstances from becoming a source either of oppression or of humiliation. Governing in the Church is subjection, and serving in the Church is perfect freedom. No individual stands alone in the Church; every one is a component part of the general system, the prosperity or adversity of each increases or diminishes the sum of the general enjoyment. The highest pleasure the Christian should feel is when he has denied himself some gratification for the sake of doing good to any other member of the body. The pleasure of doing good he finds to be the only pleasure that never palls. This *philanthropia*, this majes-

tic humility, this persuasion that nothing can be too insignificant for the attention of the wisest, which is not too insignificant to give pleasure or pain to the meanest, is (says Lord Macaulay) the great characteristic, the essential spirit of the Baconian philosophy. He might have said, with far greater truth—it is the spirit of Christianity, the kernel of which is love.

To some, the august head of the Church has given faculties which fit them to be pastors, to some to be evangelists, to some to be teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for edifying the body of Christ. To the pastor is assigned the duty of feeding the flock over which, recognising the will of Christ in the gifts he has imparted, the members of the Church have made him overseer, and which he is to feed with the hidden manna, the bread of life which came down from heaven, and to stir up the pure minds of the membership by way of remembrance to an habitual attention to the doctrines and precepts once delivered to the saints, lest at any time they should let them slip, and thus be kept by the grace of God steadfast in the faith and diligent in obedience.

The pastor is not the ambassador of Christ to the people who have placed themselves under his superintendence, since they are all equally admitted into fellowship with Christ, and are all of them priests unto God through the faith that is in Christ Jesus. He steps not, therefore, into the place of the priest's office of old—the man of God's appointment, and in

a special manner the minister and ambassador of God —the prophet and priest; but he enters into the place of the servant of them that appointed him, worthy of all honour for His works' sake; the chief among them, yet the servant of all.

The pastor of the Christian Church stands therefore in a different relationship to the membership of the Church by whom he is appointed, to that which he bears to the mere adherents who cluster around them. To the one he is the overseer for the edification of the saints, to stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance, a memorial of which the purest minds stand in need, so long as they are in the earthly house of this tabernacle. To the other he is the organ of the Church, the spokesman of the body. The ambassador of the ambassadors, the servant of the servants of God, by whom the Church, Christ's mystical body, in Christ's stead, entreats them to be reconciled to God. The ambassadors are no longer from Christ to his people, they are now from his people to the world. The apostles and early disciples, commissioned directly by our Lord, were enabled to prove the validity of their commission by signs and wonders and mighty deeds, but we find not that the ministers and office-bearers of the Church in subsequent ages differ in any respect from other men.

"Jesus we know, and Paul we know, but who are ye?" We demand the seal and superscription of Heaven to certify to the special ambassadorial commission from the great head of the Church. Christ

has given us no evidence to which we can refer in proof of any difference between the office-bearers and members of the Church. But he has given distinct and unequivocal tokens whereby we may ascertain the difference between the members of the Church and the men of the world. "By their fruits ye shall know them." The difference is not now between believer and believer—"They are all one in Christ Jesus." The difference lies between believers and the world. We thus at once upset the baseless fabric of that vision, which has landed the kingdom—the destined abode of liberty, equality, fraternity, in a lawless despotism and a foul superstition; and we place on its sure foundation the ecclesiastical constitution, which is the expression of the will of the sanctified and separated ones.

The pastor is also the watchman set in the uppermost towers of our Zion, to guard the flock from the intrusion of the evil that walketh in darkness; of the lion and the wolf, and of the wolf in sheep's clothing, and to issue the warning voice,—"*Awake, thou that sleepest.*" The greatest curse with which God, in his righteous indignation, can afflict any people, is that their watchmen should "be dumb dogs that cannot bark, sleepy, lying down, loving to slumber."

The "servant of all" is the chief among the members, and the congregation, united and severally, come under the obligation to love, honour, and obey him whom they have set over themselves in holy things, "For he is the minister of God to them for good,"

"studying to show himself approved of God, a workman that need not be ashamed of his work." Men cannot, if they would (says Chalmers), withhold their gratitude and goodwill from the man who, in the pulpit, solemnizes their consciences, and throughout their habitations brings the omnipotence of His character to bear upon them. "If thou (said the wise councillors of Rehoboam the son of Solomon) wilt be a *servant* to this people and wilt *serve* them, then will they be thy servants for ever." It was because the Spartan was taught to revere himself as one of a race of sovereigns, that this poor and small principality of old was enabled to accomplish all the mighty deeds which have obtained for it so conspicuous a place in history; and it will be when the members of the Church come to revere themselves as kings and priests unto God that she will attain her high destiny, far above all principalities and powers.

The duty of the pastor is to feed and protect the flock already gathered into the fold. He enters upon another man's field of labour when he becomes the evangelist. To some the chief shepherd, the Lord of all, gives the faculties which fit them to be pastors; to some to be evangelists; to all he gives the admonition "to abide in the same calling wherein he is called." Our faculties are too few and too weak, and our time too short and uncertain, to permit our expatiating over many fields of labour. "The Jack of all trades (according to the true proverb) is master of none."

The evangelists or missionaries are the tentacula or feelers of the "living creature," extending themselves far and wide, running to and fro, gathering in from every side those whom God has appointed to be saved, going out into the hedges and ditches and compelling them to come in. They are, however, a part of the body, and derive their ability to labour from the "*sustentation*" received from the corporation of which they form a part, the Lord having ordained that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel, a most wise and blessed ordination, by which the few are kept in subjection to the many. Wages are everywhere the badge of servitude, sanctified and made honourable by Christ, who, when he took upon himself the form of a servant, received the promise "that he should see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." The wages of the believer in Jesus—the recompence of the reward—are the promise of eternal life in the world which is to come; and the wages of the pastors and evangelists, as such (not as believers, but as ministers), is the promise of those who appointed them, "that bread shall be given to them, and that their water shall be sure."

"Ye know (says Christ) that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, but it shall not be so with you, but whosoever shall be great among you, let him be your minister, and whosoever shall be chief among you, let him be the servant of all;" and considering the tendency of power to encroach more and more upon the rights of others, and the immense

mischief that would accrue, and also that has accrued from the whole corporate vitality of the body becoming concentrated in that small portion which exercises the government, the Lord has ordained "that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel," and as ordinary labourers, who are worthy of their hire, that they should be paid for their work, universal experience having testified in the history of mankind that all is lost when any man, or class of men, have more power than all the rest put together. Thus the few are kept in subjection to the many by the material guarantee of their temporal support; and the many, in a willing obedience to the few by gratitude for spiritual benefits received, and religious instruction and consolation imparted. O the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God—how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.

After the election of the pastor, the head of the corporate body, the Church, in organising itself, proceeds next to appoint the captains over hundreds and the captains over tens, overseers under him who occupies the supreme place of exhortation, to keep in good obedience and honest fame, the diverse houses and variety of persons, "who have associated themselves together as members of one body." The duty of the elder, or help, or overseer, is to assist the minister in awakening and strengthening the Christian life of the congregation, and in upholding a Christian discipline throughout it all.

No provision, as a general rule, need be made for the "sustentation" of the elders, as they are neither separated from the people, nor taken away from their temporal avocations, being only required to devote a portion of their time to the direct service of the Church. They are expected, however, as an appendage to the pastorate, to give at all times their hearty co-operation and support to the minister, and to exhibit in their lives and conversation the beauty of holiness as living epistles of Christ, striving by God's grace in some good measure to be able to say with Paul, "Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ." The stimulus of human example being here (says Chalmers) applied to enforce the duty of imitating a divine example. We are called upon to be followers of Paul, even as he was of Christ; a legitimate argument, therefore, and which demonstrates the use of holding ourselves forth as patterns to our fellow-men, and the responsibility under which we lie, for the sake of others, to maintain the walk and conversation which become the gospel of the Lord Jesus. The education of character is very much a question of models; though good rules may do much, good models are found to do far more, for in the latter we have instruction in action, and wisdom at work. Christ is the perfect pattern furnished in the Word for our individual imitation, and the Church constructed according to his precepts is the prescribed model for the formation of an organised human society. The Christian Church, resplendent in the beauty of

holiness, abounding in love and in good works, *the mens sana in corpore sano*, drawing all men unto her by the cords of love, would do more for the regeneration of the world than can ever be done by all the complicated and various schemes of man's devising; the wisdom of man is foolishness when seen in the light of the everlasting gospel.

The Lord having given pastors to feed the souls of his people, and elders to distribute the "hidden manna," and carry it home from house to house, has appointed within his Church "teachers" to instruct the young, and to bring them up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." To some he gave to be pastors, to some teachers, for the edificatiion of the body of Christ.

By the law of Nature, the instruction of their little ones is no doubt a duty incumbent upon parents, and Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil the law, and to fulfil all righteousness; when, however, the parents become the members of a corporate body, of the privileges of which the children claim to partake, the corporation become interested in, and responsible for the training and instruction of the children. "Behold me and the children whom thou hast given me," is the attitude in which the Church should present herself before her Lord. A church and a school should therefore be set down invariably together; wherever there is a church for the sanctification of the adults, there should also be a school for the edification of the young. Here rich and poor should

meet together, and here, at an age tender and impressible should be conveyed to the understanding and the heart, by precept and example, the lesson of a common brotherhood.

The teaching of the family is solitary and selfish. The teaching of class or caste seminaries of education is perverting, it fosters all the miserable assumptions of caste, of which men are so emulous and so jealous, which fill those who enjoy them with the most selfish pride, and those who are deprived of them with the most corroding envy; it fosters all those disintegrating affections which have broken in pieces the unity of the human family, and severed the seamless robe of Christ's righteousness, which is alike over all and upon all them that believe. Congregational schools under the effective control of the parents of the children and the rulers of the Church, to whom jointly and severally belong the duty of training the young in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, appear to be that scheme of education most consonant to right reason for the introduction of Christian faith and fellowship, and most in harmony with the teaching and practice of him, the *Great Rabbi*, who invited little children to come to himself; the good Shepherd, who gathered the lambs with his arms, and carried them in his bosom, and of whom the Church is the representative. Primary schools are mainly conversant with the impartation of first principles of knowledge. To impart the elements of knowledge, the good and the true seed which has life in itself, is the duty of the parent

and of the Church, which stands to the children of the congregation in *loco parentis.*

The Free Church of Scotland, in the ardour of her first love, and the exultation of recovered freedom, gave utterance through her General Assembly in the year 1843—the year of her emancipation—to the following sentiment, which should be written in letters of gold :—"*It is conceived that the functions of the Church cannot be considered completely fulfilled, till provision be made for the religious teaching of the children and young persons connected with it, from the lowest elementary school, to the first institutions of scientific learning.*"

The aim of the Church being not only to teach but also to train the young to act habitually on religious principles under the powers of the world which is to come, and which is the highest style of humanity ; the Church interweaves the knowledge of the works with the knowledge of the word of God ; thus, to the intuitive logic of Newton's mind, morals and physics were indissolubly connected, and it is to an education in which religion and knowledge are dissevered, or in which secular instruction so greatly predominates in the business of the school, as to drive religion into the bye-ways and bye-corners of study, that we are indebted for the indifferentism, approaching to infidelity, which characterises the educated classes of the present day, and which represses all generous aspirations, and extinguishes in an universal selfishness all elevated desires. To us it seems that, as the business

of man upon the earth is to serve Almighty God, not with forms and words, but with the heart, and with the understanding, that holiness to the Lord should be stamped upon every subject of study, and that children and young persons should be taught to find their happiness in the discharge of duty to God and to one another.

"Wisdom out of Christ (says Trail) is damning folly." Were children from their infancy habituated to the practice of moral duties from religious motives, we have reason to expect that the cast given to character would remain permanent throughout life. It is the word of inspiration: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

The ecclesiastical system of Scotland in its earlier and better days, incorporated the scholastic with the ecclesiastical, for the purpose of sanctifying education and plying the youth of the land with the lessons of the Bible, that book which has beautifully been said to have "God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any admixture of error for its contents." There is an universal oneness, a linking together, a mutual dependency throughout all the creations of God, and throughout all the institutions of his appointment. They have the smack of eternity about them. They have no beginning and no end. The child is the parent of the man, and the man the begetter of the child. The thing which was is that which shall be, and that which is done is that

which shall be done. The Church creates the school to bring up the young in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and the young thus brought up replenish the Church with volunteers, and not mercenaries, to fight the good fight of the faith, who in their turn bring forth and bring up a new race to serve the Lord in their day and generation. We therefore hold the schoolmaster to be an ecclesiastical personage, and the school part and parcel of that instrumentality which God has provided for the conversion of the nations. The nomination to the office of schoolmaster should therefore be by the will of the membership, and his place in the constitutional organisation of the Church, among the elders, among those who are appointed to aid the minister, in indoctrinating and ingraining every separate atom of the body corporate, small and great, young and old, with holiness to the Lord. We think congregational schools to be an indispensable and intrinsic portion of the organisation of the Church, which we think precludes and anathematises altogether every scheme of a national education which ignores ecclesiastical control.

The impulse which gave expression to the generous deliverance of the General Assembly of the Free Church of 1843, was, we believe, of God, but the after considerations — hostility to the Established Church, denominational jealousies, and fears for the sustentation fund of the ministers, were doubtlessly of man. These led to the abandonment of the ecclesiastical plan, and to the surrender to the constituted

authorities of the state, of that which, by reason and by Scripture, was the special province and duty of the Church.

There is here no question whatever regarding the responsibilities of parents in respect to the training of their children, the question is in respect to the duty and responsibility of the Church; and so obvious is it, even to common sense, that the parental insufficiency or inability should be supplemented or supplied by the Church, that in every age of the world, and under every condition of humanity prior to the Reformation, the education of the young was the office of the priesthood, or of men under its superintendence. It was not until the fatal admixture of the Church and of the world, by the breaking down of the wall of partition, that the Church, under the strong delusion which overshadowed her, sacrificed her children to mammon. The flimsy cloak of religion thrown over the teaching of the men of the world, by the formal and occasional teaching of the Church, is cast aside in the battle of life, and in the heat of competition and contention, and that teaching only is influential over the conduct with which the mind is saturated and the heart ingrained. The scheme of Knox—the scriptural and the true—which set down a church and a school side by side together, under the CONSTITUTIONAL government of the congregation,—a brotherhood united by common sympathies and common pursuits, in whom "Christ is formed the hope of glory," would give to the whole nature of man soul, and body, and spirit,

to the physical, moral, and intellectual faculties, the training and the development which might fit them for after usefulness as members of society, and as members of the Church. For, so long as the Church and school were found side by side together, the school for the children being the appendage to the church of the parents, it is the testimony of an historian, a noble lord, so little enamoured of the politics and religion of Scotland, that could he, with any colour of truth, have made a different report, he would have done it with all his heart: "That to whatever land the Scotsman might wander, to whatever calling he might betake himself, in America or India, in trade or in war, the advantages he derived from his early training raised him above all competitors. If he were taken into warehouse as a porter, he soon became a foreman; if enlisted in the army, he soon became a sergeant. Scotland, meanwhile, in spite of the barrenness of her soil, and the severity of her climate, made such progress in agriculture and manufactures, in commerce, in letters, in science, in all that constitutes civilization, as the old world had never seen equalled, and as even the new world has scarcely seen surpassed." This fulfilment of the promise that godliness has of the things of this world, is the inducement to the world "to train up the child in the way he should go," and it is the earnest and the assurance of the promise it has of the world which is to come.

The recoil of feeling from the "Mystery of Iniquity," and from the usurpations of a priesthood,

which had misconstrued and misapplied, travestied, and burlesqued, the institutions of the Christian Church, for their own peculiar benefit, aroused the sensibilities of our common nature at the time of the Reformation, and caused all men, wherever they were themselves emancipated from ecclesiastical tyranny, to withdraw their little ones from the teaching and training of the priesthood. The seductions of existing exigencies have also led the Churches of the Reformation to sacrifice principle to expediency, and everywhere to hand over to the state, or to throw loose upon the world, the education of the young; thus running from one extreme of error to another, both equally distant from the way of wisdom and of truth. If the one mode of teaching bred and preserved slaves for the priesthood, the other mode of teaching breeds and preserves slaves for the world. The doctrine of the love of money is the philosophy of the secular preceptors, and the "Principles of the Wealth of Nations," the Bible of the secular schools. Cortez and Pizzaro desolated the West, enforcing on a reluctant people the forms and formulas of a spurious Christianity. Protestant England, seeking the *goods* and not the *good* of the Orientals, poisons the Chinese with her opium, and, to open markets for her calicoes, embrues her hands in their blood.

The teaching of the priest is unsuitable, and the teaching of the civilian is adverse to the introduction into the world of the kingdom of peace and of righteousness, for they all seek their own, and in the

struggle of low passions and interests, are compelled, not unfrequently, to have recourse to the equivocal use of very equivocal means for the attainment of very equivocal ends. But let the members of the churches be restored to their legitimate influence on the body, and let the office-bearers of the Church be the responsible executors of the common will of the organized community. Let us have no more hole and corner legislation by cliques and coteries, nor any more "close burrough" elections for offices in the Church, and then the responsibility of communicating religious instruction to their children would, if recommitted to the Church, be recommitted to the parentage of the churches, and the interests of religion would no longer be imperilled for the most paltry objects, or for the gratification of the most ungenerous ambitions. When the "Church of Scotland" incorporated the Christianity of the whole land, the school was the supplement to the church, part and parcel of the same system; and though they fell alike into bondage to the State, they testified alike to the fact, that if it be the duty of the Church, by her ministers, to make straight that which is crooked, and to raise up that which is bowed down, it is no less the duty of the Church, by her schoolmasters, "To teach the young idea how to shoot," for, "As the twig is bent the tree will grow." When John Knox planned his school system for Scotland, he had in contemplation one united religious community. The essential principle of his plan was that which everywhere made the school an appendage to

the Church, the members of which were to feel the school to be their own, where their children were protected, as far as possible, from all evil influences, and trained to love and to practise the things which they themselves believed to be most true and most excellent. Thus, even in the public school, the responsibility of the parent was unimpeached, and unimpaired. But when men began to differ, when divisions multiplied, when dissent became more and more disseminated, it is obvious that the parish school, the school intended for all the children of the parish, was no longer the appendage to the church of all the parents. Yet the principle of Knox has the stamp of heaven upon it, in its universality and applicability; it can be carried out in all its integrity (notwithstanding our dissensions) in every congregation of Christians; for, wherever there are a sufficient number of adults to constitute a congregation, there also may be found a sufficient number of young persons to constitute a school, the materials for a church and a school naturally exist inseparably together.

It is not the principle of Knox that is at fault, but our controversies and contentions, sectarian jealousies and emulations, which, not content with being autonomous, autocratic, and select, inspire each section of the Church with the ambition to be predominant. Ambition, that vice by which the angels fell, and the pride, and the prejudice, and the revenge, and the spite of a ruling and dominant oligarchy, account for the part taken by the churches towards the settlement

of this question. The majority of professing Christians, lukewarm and indifferent, by whatsoever name they are called, are not unwilling to purchase peace by the discharge altogether of religious teaching from the school; and the jealousies of the churches have made them willing to deprive the scholastic system of all its vitality, by severing the things temporal from the things eternal, the spiritual from the material, the soul from the body. "Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it," is the universal exclamation. Alas! there is not one of the religious denominations to yearn, with a mother's heart, over the little child.

We are told by these latitudinarians, with a seriousness which would be ludicrous, were not the subject too grave for a jest, to rely on the Christian zeal and orthodoxy of the parents for the training of the young in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Is not this a most cruel sarcasm? Look at the drunken and besotted populations of our lanes and alleys. Look at the infidel and the atheist. Look at the blasphemer and the unclean; the sensualist and the profane, out of all ranks and conditions of men. Look at the overtaxed labourer and mechanic, returning weary and exhausted from his daily toil. Look at the men and women immured in our factories from the rising to the setting of the sun, and say if it be little better than the arch-fiend's mock,* to tell us,—"These are the parties to whom, primarily and properly, belong

* "The Arch-fiend's mock, to lip a wanton, and believe her chaste."

the godly upbringing of the rising generation." Dr. Guthrie has said, "To a father's house, especially to the domestic circle of a quiet Sabbath evening, I look for the godly upbringing of the young, far more certainly than to yonder school." And so do we, but not until the advent of the Millennium, when every father's house will be sanctified by the Word of God and by prayer. The old way of Knox, the scriptural and the true, precluded the necessity altogether of any general national system of primary education; unless that may be called national, when the whole territory of a nation comes to be portioned off into small republics, each managing its own affairs. The establishment, in this sense of a national system, was the aspiration of Knox, and of the great men who immediately succeeded him. The school was the supplement of the Church, part and parcel of that instrumentality which incorporated the Christianity of the whole land. The system of Knox must be revived, and carried out in the spirit of it, if Christianity, the old, active, all-pervading Christianity, is again to flourish amongst us.

It has been said by one of the most eminent of the writers on the side of a general national system of education, "That as it is the right of the State to give a written law to the people, it is therefore the duty of the State to enable the people to read the law;" and, "As it is the right of the State to impose taxes on the people, it is the interest of the State to increase, by a good secular education, the economical value of

its subjects." As we do not object to these conclusions, we are not very careful to scrutinize the premises; but, on the other hand, we would observe: "That as it is not only the right, but the very end of the existence of the Church, to give the Bible to the people, it is her imperative duty to enable the people to read the Bible."

Considering the twofold nature of man—corporeal and spiritual—the twofold relationship, to the material and immaterial worlds—his twofold existence, in time and in eternity, his education in this state ef probation should have reference to his twofold estate. It is admitted that a State education can have reference to one of these conditions only; whereas an ecclesiastical system may have, and should have, reference to both. This consideration alone ought to determine the question, Whether to the State or to the Church belongs the education of the people, especially when backed by the promise which godliness has, both of this world and of that which is to come.

It is for the primary education we are contending—for the schools which sow the seed—which impart the elements of knowledge—which strike deep into the fleshy tablets of the heart (before they are overlaid with the cares of the world), and which leave *there* an impression that lasts from infancy to old age. We are willing to leave all the higher seminaries of education to be maintained and superintended by the state,—the academies, gymnasia, colleges, or by whatsoever other names they may be called. Were the

educators of the people organised into a separate and distinct order or profession, and were the teachers of the higher seminaries to be selected from the teachers of these primary schools, without distinction of sect or caste, then we should have an unsectarian education provided for the youths of riper years, and who, by reason of use, have had their senses exercised to discern good from evil. Sectarianism is no doubt an evil which cannot be got rid of, save by one of two methods—either by banishing religion altogether from our thoughts, and depriving religion altogether of influence over our conduct, or by making religion the supreme business and study of our lives, stamping holiness to the Lord on all that we think and do. It may appear at first sight paradoxical that two such opposite methods should lead to the same conclusion. Nevertheless it is true. The Atheist, the Deist, the Rationalist, the Pantheist, the profane and the profligate, are not sectarian (*though each is stubborn enough in his own way*)—they care for none of the things that are called by that name; to them all sects and sectarian opinions are alike indifferent and abhorrent. The saints of God are not sectarian; they have their differences in discipline it is true, and their diversities in detail, but all is forgiven and forgotten in the great fact that they are all Christ's; sheep of his pasture; objects of his bounty; monuments of his redeeming love. There are two ways, then, to eradicate sectarianism—either to educate without religion, or to give a thorough re-

ligious education. Implant in the young heart love to Christ as the Saviour of sinners, and all the rest about which men wrangle and dispute will soon be seen to be *but "leather and prunella."* Dispel ignorance by knowledge, and jealousy by equality, and sectarianism will soon become a very manageable affair.

We have been forewarned by the apostle, "that in the last days perilous times shall come, when men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof." The first great apostacy from the truth as it is in Jesus, was the degradation of the human intellect, the prostration of the understanding, the adoption consequently of a vile superstition, in room of the elevating and sanctifying religion of the gospel.

The last apostacy will be the exaltation and deification of the intellect—that which has been denominated rationalism—which makes the impossible demand of "*demonstration*" (the evidence of things seen), in lieu of faith (the evidence of things which are invisible), and would have men to walk by sight rather than by faith, towards those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the hearts of men to conceive.

The most obvious excellence of Revelation consists in the sublimity of the objects which it has discovered to the eye of faith, rising far above and beyond the

ken of our benighted understandings. To the upturned eye of faith those heavenly realities, lustrous in the splendours of uncreated light, appear luminous and distinct objects of vision, as real essences and existences as any which are cognizable to our external senses, and which may be viewed by our mortal eye, or examined by our mortal touch. The little child, confiding in the wisdom, the truth, and the love of his earthly father, hesitates not, amid the many strange objects presented to his view, to believe the testimony of his father regarding them; some are rejected by him as mere delusions, and some believed on as realities, not on the strength of his own wisdom, or confidence in his own judgment, but on the strength of his faith, and confidence in the wisdom and truth of his father. But the man of ordinary understanding, grown up to man's estate, and emancipated from parental control, feeling himself to be on any equality with other men, judges for himself, and pins not his faith to the garments of another, being as well able as another to comprehend those things which lie within the sphere of his own observation; he will not believe without proof, his judgment must be convinced, and his understanding must be satisfied. In refusing, therefore, our faith to those statements which we cannot grasp by our limited faculties, nor comprehend within the limited circumference of our knowledge, the tops of which are lost in the light which is ineffable, and the roots of which strike deep into the darkness which sur-

rounds the throne of the Eternal, do we not treat the Almighty as if he were such a one as ourselves; as if his ways were as our ways, and his thoughts as our thoughts? "If I am a Father, where is mine honour, and if I am a Master, where is my fear?" says the Lord of Hosts unto you. We believed in the days of our childhood, on the testimony of an earthly parent, many things which we could not understand; how much more rather should we believe on the testimony of the Father of our spirits, those things which are spiritual, which no eye hath seen, nor ear heard, and which have not even entered into the minds of men to conceive? To set aside Revelation on such high and inaccessible subjects as these is not only an insult to the majesty of heaven, but is as glaring a transgression of all just principle, as to set aside experience on any subject of practical concern.

In the circumstances of the present time, if Christianity is really to flourish on the earth, and to possess an influence over the conduct of men for the future, the seeds of Christianity must be sown liberally in the hearts of the young, and its doctrines interwoven with the subjects of their daily studies, until, by the grace of God, a habit of association be formed between the things which are seen and temporal and the things which are unseen and eternal, such as in after life will impress with a devotional character every occupation of the day, and convert pleasure and business into elements of communion with God; so that whether we eat or drink, or what-

soever we do, we may do all to the glory of God. Christian principles, early implanted, will grow up into Christian dispositions; and Christian dispositions will ripen into the fair fruit of Christian practice. After the revolution of ages we are on the old battle-field again, on which our first parents fell, and led to it by the old seduction, "Ye shall be as gods." Christ was a king before he was a prophet or a priest, and having vindicated his prophetical and priestly offices, it behoves him now to vindicate his kingly authority by the restitution of all things—to subdue his enemies under him, and to establish his kingdom, which shall never be moved. There are now at this time voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and earthquakes, for the "devil hath come down with great power, because he knoweth that he hath but a little time." But "he that believeth shall not make haste." He shall, unmoved amid the storm of elements, the wreck of empires, and the crash of worlds, possess his soul in patience. "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but in the end it will speak and not lie, though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

Religion has been too much represented by the popular evangelical bodies, as if it were a thing only for the next world, and for securing to us a happy eternity, whereas, according to the doctrine of Scripture, godliness is profitable unto all things; and to anticipate, as it would seem, and to obviate this dreamy pietism, and unauthorised separation of the

things seen and temporal from the things which are unseen and eternal, our Lord has expressly declared that the love which he will acknowledge and recompense at the last great day of account, is the love which was manifested in ministering to the necessities of the members of his mystical body. "For verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my *brethren*, ye have done it unto me."

The deaconate (the third order of office-bearers in the Church) was instituted by apostolic authority to regulate and conduct this ministration; "for it is not reason (says the Apostle Paul) that we of the eldership should leave the word of God and serve tables." The deaconate of the New Testament is the link which binds the earthly to the heavenly, the temporal to the eternal, the practical to the doctrinal. It is the missing link which is wanting to every system of priestcraft; it gives a body to the word, a reality to the preaching, and unites the members of the Church to one another by reciprocal good offices, and by mutual dependency, which is the very essence of corporeity, and that in which organisation consists.

The formation and constitution of the deaconate according to the word of God, is by the universal suffrage and pre-election of the members. "Look ye out among yourselves (says Paul) men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." The freedom of a freely appointed and responsible deaconate is the

test of a rising or falling Church in its material or visible aspect, as the doctrine of justification by faith is the test of a rising or falling Church in its spiritual aspect or creed.

The one is the test of conformity to the divine plan of organisation, the other of conformity to the divine quality of the teaching. Whatever may be said in favour of withdrawing the spiritual office-bearers from direct responsibility to the members, we believe that nothing can be more reasonable, or more true and just, than that the deacons should hold office at the pleasure of their constituents. The simple restoration of its administrative functions to the deaconate, would effect, by means of the "sustentation" through them of the ministers, all that can be desired for keeping the head in harmony with the body, and securing, on the part of the clergy, a faithful discharge of duty. Were the deacons responsible to their constituents, it would also effectually ensure that the dominion and power should appertain to the *people* of the saints of the Most High, to whom the inheritance is promised.

The duty of the deaconate is to collect and distribute the free-will offerings of the congregation, made willingly, by the blessing of God, on a gospel faithfully preached and faithfully applied; and to provide a sufficient sustentation for the preachers of the Word, for the teachers of the young, and for the poor and needy of the congregation. A suitable provision for the preachers and teachers, who are the servants of

all, and therefore entitled to receive from all the reward of their labour, is a claim of justice and not of charity; until this debt be discharged, men have no right to be generous in other directions. Contributions in such cases to other objects, resemble the tithes which the Pharisees of old paid on the anise and the cummin, while they neglected the weightier works of the law; or they are like the enlarging of the borders of their phylacteries by the hypocrites, that they might be seen of men.

Having discharged the claims of justice, then let the flood-gates of the heart be opened to the outgoings of a diffusive benevolence. But as we find in tropical regions, when the overflowing rivers spread their waters over the plains, without direction or control, that the rank luxuriance of vegetation which they occasion, becomes the hotbed of pestilence and of death; so in the moral world, it is found that a general and undefined almsgiving fosters the growth of many of the most noxious productions of human nature, and the greater the fervour of zeal, unless regulated and restrained by wisdom from on high, the greater the amount of mischief which is thus produced.

The prevenient wisdom of God has committed to the deaconate the regulation of the Church's charities; the poor are the special objects of its solicitude; they are assigned to its care by Him who has "prepared of his own goodness for the poor," and who wills that his own people should put on charity,

which is the bond of perfectness. "So long as a poor man remains in the state, (says St. Just,) you will not have established a veritable republic." This proposition is one of those rays of light which from time to time breaks in upon the darkness of the world. It is one of those truths which the philosopher in his closet has been able to excogitate or excavate from out of the superincumbent mass of prejudices and vain philosophies—a deduction of science with which the revelation of the gospel entirely concurs. It were a poor conception indeed, that so great a quarrel as the Reformation was for the truth or falsehood of a speculative system of theology, and not for the introduction of a practical righteousness—a faith working by love. The most shocking part of our advanced civilisation is the startling contrast between enormous wealth and abject poverty—between the cabin or cellar of the beggar and the palace of the millionaire. Unless the Church be advancing in the way of remedying these inequalities, then is her preaching vain, and her faith is also vain. "To raise the poor out of the dust, and to lift up the beggar from the dunghill," is the designed and destined effect of the faithful preaching and teaching of the Word.

Let us not, however, be misunderstood. As there are in heaven many mansions where all are equally happy, (happy to the fulness of their capacity,) and on earth many grades of society where life is equally enjoyed, the constitution of the Church is not in-

tended to produce one level uniformity of condition; it is meant only to secure for all a sufficiency of all things necessary for their spiritual and temporal well-being, according to the respective circumstances and position of each in the sacred confraternity. "For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman, and he that is called being free, is the Lord's servant."

The pastor or minister, the ruling elders, and the deacons, (*these three,*) are the office-bearers which, under different appellations, are sanctioned in the Christian Church; the eldership to take the oversight of the things spiritual, the deaconship of the things temporal; while these two are united under the moderatorship of the pastor, so that there should be no schism in the body. To these offices every member of the Church in whom the members recognise the necessary gifts and graces, is alike eligible—all being of the people, and by the people, and for the people—the people themselves being all of them members of Christ in the judgment of charity; so that while care is taken that all things are done "decently and in order," a perfectly unembarrassed union may be secured of all parties in the service of God and godliness, to the extinction of the enmity of caste, and to the fulfilment of the promise: "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." The saints of God of every degree, uniting, under the guidance of the

Spirit, on terms of a perfect equality and cordial confraternity, for the establishment of the kingdom and the triumph of the faith.

The organisation of the body is primarily intended for the benefit of the body itself; the pastor, the elders, and the deacons, are ordained by Christ speaking through the membership of his Church, for the perfecting of the body, to "keep it in good obedience and in honest fame," built up together an habitation of God through the Spirit. The corporate body is then, as a living individual organisation, to act upon the world which is without, for the good of them who are without—the Christian Church having been constituted for the good of all men, but especially for the good of them who are of the "household of faith."

It is curious, and not unprofitable, to trace the parallelism, in the good providence of God, of our deliverance in this country from civil and ecclesiastical bondage. In the days of King John, the barons of England—an order distinct from and elevated above the people—extorted the great charter of our civil liberties from a reluctant monarch; a charter which contained the principles and the essence of universal freedom, yet, in its actual and practical results, it at first emancipated only the great barons themselves from kingly oppression and misrule, and left the mass of the people as before in subjection to their feudal landlords. Notwithstanding the enactments of the great charter, it was only when the

barons were reduced to difficulties by their contests with the crown or with one another, and were compelled to purchase the zealous services of their dependents, that they surrendered to them a portion of that liberty which, by the charter, was equally the birthright of both; but as every instalment of the debt, or relaxation of the claim, bestowed a privilege, and conferred a power to claim and obtain more, the civil freedom of the masses advanced at an accelerated pace, until it reached its present stand-point—"The British Constitution."

> "Methinks I hear a little bird which sings,
> The people by and bye shall be the stronger."

So likewise in the Church, "the Holy Bible," the charter of the religious liberty wherewith Christ made his people free, reclaimed from the Pope by the people under the leading of insurgent priests, issued at the first in little more than the emancipation of the clerical body itself from the despotism of the universal bishop, the mass of the people remaining as before in blind subjection to their spiritual guides, it was only as the pressure of heterodox doctrine within the Church, or the contentions with the civil power from without, rendered it prudent for the clergy "to enlarge the cords of their tents," and to admit the laity to share more and more largely in the privilege and franchise of the ecclesiastical commonwealth, that the Church advanced step by step on the path of a new obedience in the precepts of the gospel, until, in the progress of events, we have arrived at our present

ecclesiastical stand-point — "the Free Church of Scotland," *the youngest daughter of the Reformation.* Much yet remains to be done both in Church and State to reach the happy period of promise, when the saints shall possess the kingdom; when the dominion and the power shall be given TO THE PEOPLE of the saints of the Most High; when Church and State shall be identical; and when Christ shall reign supreme alike over all, king and priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.

Yet let us thank God and take courage, the progress we are making is all in the right direction. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." We are receiving now but the earnest of the inheritance, the first-fruits of our promised possessions; they are, however, as the grapes of Eshcol, evidence of the abundant fruitfulness of the land.

The results of the extension of popular rights and privileges which have been so grudgingly bestowed, and so tenaciously withheld, encourages us boldly to go forward in the same direction, and to give and to receive further illustrations of the proposition, "That to interest oneself in affairs of any kind one must take a part in them." Small as has been the relaxation of "*red tape;*" few and paltry, cabined, cribbed, confined as have been the powers and the privileges conceded to the membership of the Churches, yet they have all of them been fruitful of the happiest results. We are far from considering contributions to the funds

of the Church to be an exact exponent of faith in the heart, yet we appeal to the experience of all, and to the consciences of each, whether, if the faith be lively and a faith working by love, the abundance of their joy will not express itself in the riches of their liberality. Who would have imagined, previous to the Disruption, that a third part of the people of Scotland—of the lower and middle classes, with very few of the rich and the noble among them—moved solely by the spirit within them, would *annually*, of their own accord, contribute the sum of nearly £400,000 to the service of the Church of which they are members; this sum of £400,000 being over and above the legal assessments which they pay along with others to the churches and charities of the State, and to the contributions which they make, not of constraint, but willingly, to those of other denominations.

The fear of injuring the sustentation fund of the ministers has prevented the free churches from enforcing the claims of the schools and the schoolmasters, and reconciled them to hand over to the State the education of the young, thus surrendering the right hand of their power. Nothing can be more suicidal. It is like grudging to the earth the seed-corn which, by the blessing of God on the labours of the husbandman, shall in the harvest-time return, some twenty, some thirty, and some an hundred fold. Young men and young women grow up under a very imperfect sense of their responsibilities and duties, simply because there is nothing in their family life,

nor in the rest of the world with which they come in contact, to teach them that which the school had neglected to teach. "Train up the child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." The school is the fountain from which the Church is perennially fed; it behoves the Church, therefore, to see to it, that the school be a fountain of living waters. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No, not one?

Secular education, under secular teachers, is mainly directed to the means of acquiring wealth; the child learns without much teaching the desirableness of the possession, since money, he soon perceives, obtains for one at every period of life the objects of present enjoyment and desire. The young heart is therefore set upon the love of money, which the Scriptures assure us to be the root of all evil, a passion which grows with its growth, and strengthens with its strength. The teaching of the Church, on the other hand, along with the means by which money is obtained, inculcates the right use of money, and places the antidote alongside of the bane, encouraging the practice of generosity, liberality, and benevolence, by every befitting consideration and reward, making the child to feel that the reflex happiness of another is the greatest happiness to itself, and to learn that many pleasures are enjoyed by those who live for others rather than for themselves, of which the selfish are wholly ignorant. Thus the monster evil of covetousness, the strongest and the vilest passion of the

human heart, is subdued by that social love which is the truest self-love, and constrained to contribute to the happiness of man and to the glory of God. "Out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong comes forth sweetness."

The Church which would thus train up the young in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, which would yearn over her little ones with a mother's heart, and which, as they grow up in knowledge and in love, would admit them freely into fellowship with herself—a fellowship of liberty, equality, fraternity. A Church thus popular in her framework, with a vital religion pervading all her members, recognising only two qualifications—the qualification of knowledge and the qualification of grace—would shine as a star in the firmament, and would draw all men unto her.

Experience has testified that the light of Christian truth is ever mingled with the warmth of Christian feeling, and that wherever its beams fall, the same kind and loving sympathies spring forth, uniting man to man, even to the ends of the earth. Religion and intercourse with their superiors in condition and in knowledge, are the most efficient agents for elevating the poor and the ignorant. An intercourse of unaffected kindness, testifying to a real interest in their welfare, for their own, and for their Redeemer's sake, of whose mystical body they severally are members, and of whose salvation they all in common partake. Man is not intended by the God who made him to be

an isolated worker for selfish ends; he is placed on the surface of the earth to co-operate with his fellows in a moral organisation, every part of which should work harmoniously together for the good of all, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, meeting together on the common platform of Brethren in the Lord. The scheme of the Church is not one to foster indolence and indifference, nor to encourage a drowsy and perfunctory discharge of duty, "a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep." It rather gives forth the warning voice with no uncertain sound, "Awake, thou that sleepest!" "Be up and doing!" "Work out your own salvation," both spiritual and temporal! While God by his Spirit is working in you, and by the self-same Spirit is working for you, in the hearts of other men.

The first Reformation reclaimed the true doctrine from the false glosses of superstition, and the carnal additions of men "of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith." It emancipated the Church from the thraldom of spiritual wickedness in high places.

The second Reformation, which is now in progress, has mainly to deal with the emancipation of the membership from all usurping authority over it, whether civil or ecclesiastical, whether from within or from without, and with the Establishment of the kingdom, or the gathering into one all God's people throughout the world, of every kindred, and nation, and people, and tongue, excluding from the holy con-

fraternity, whatsoever defileth or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.

The second Reformation must vindicate the supremacy of conscience, and secure to the membership the liberty wherewith Christ made his people free. The Church must be emancipated by it from the shackles of civil domination, not being under law but under grace. The Church must therefore come out of the world and be separate from it, she must (as a corporate body) denude herself of the things which are Cæsar's, and enrobe herself with the things which are Christ's. The poor of this world rich in faith are the heirs of the kingdom and the types of the Church. Her poverty is her protection, and her weakness is her strength, "in all things approving herself as the minister of God, as poor, yet making many rich, as having nothing, yet possessing all things." "Her children are the heritage of the Lord," and having her "quiver full of them, she need not be afraid to speak to her enemies in the gate."

A church established by the state is of necessity under bondage to the civil power; but a church non-established and nominally Free, is actually in bondage, if endowed with corporate wealth, with the things which Cæsar claims as being peculiarly under his jurisdiction. The only true liberty for the Church is her corporate poverty, and, under the sense of her emptiness and insufficiency, to lean solely on her Beloved, and to look to him through his Spirit working in her members, to give to her day by day

continually her daily bread. The sustentation of the servants of the Church is an act of simple justice, which might be enforced by enactments, and limited within precise boundaries, but the great master builder of the Church has seen fit to leave it to the spontaneous working of the regenerated heart, so that it may not be of constraint, but willingly. A tax self-imposed by a sense of gratitude, and not by the obligation of law, a free-will offering, which the Lord of recompences will surely requite.

The judgment of the civil power in the Auchterarder case compelled the Free Church of Scotland to abandon the state endowments. The recent judgment on the M'Millan case will probably compel her to make yet a farther step in advance towards a simple dependence for her sustentation on the providence of God, by abandoning all corporate funds, and all ecclesiastical endowments, which are, in fact, an attempt at independence, and casting herself unreservedly on the free-will offerings of her people, the members of the Church having all things so much in common, that the abundance of one shall supply the deficiencies of the other, and that not of constraint, but willingly, a willingness which no civil power can compel or impart. The civil power may and can compel the payment of a debt, but neither may nor can compel the bestowal of a benevolence,—the free gift from one man to another.

Justification by faith is the first principle of the doctrine of Christ, and the equality of the brethren

the first principle of the Church's organisation. The age is prolific of plans to redeem without Christ, or by other means than those of Christ's appointment, it grapples boldly with sin, and with social evils, the consequence of sin; it has its orders of brotherhood, and of human priesthood; its societies, and its committees, but it has not faith, it passes by the gospel and the Church, and walks amidst the sparks of its own kindling. If the decay of faith be a sign of the last days, men should solemnly consider lest the end come upon them like a thief in the night, for never surely since the beginning of the revelation was there a time of so little faith upon the earth. It is a time of much profession, a time of much benevolence, a time of much self-denying philanthropy and self-sacrificing liberality; but it is a time when "men walk in the light of their own fire," the deductions of natural reason, and not the obedience of faith, being the guide and rule of their conduct. Ours no doubt is a reasonable service, and nothing is required of us to do that is contrary to right reason. The law of right reason implanted in our hearts is as truly the law of God, as the law of the gospel imprinted in our Bibles. Between reason and revelation there is an eternal amity, and the reason why they seem so often to differ is, that reason is obscured by impenetrable clouds of passions and of prejudices, ambitions, emulations, hatreds, malice, and all uncharitableness, which interpose a screen between reason and revelation, between the mind of man and the truth, so that

it is impossible for the natural man to receive the things of the Spirit of God, "until the veil be taken away from his heart."

The eager competition of ambitious and influential men to stand out prominently before the world, and favourably in the world's eye, has led to a multitudinous variety of fantastic scheming, the doctors of the body politic seldom agree as to the relative value of their respective nostrums, that which is recommended by one as the panacea for every evil, is denounced by another as charlatanary and imposture, sheer imbecility and folly—

"Who shall decide when doctors disagree?"

A spurious liberality competing for popular favour has nearly obliterated in the public mind all distinction between virtue and vice, and extended sympathy and support equally to the righteous and the unrighteous, to the godly and the profane. Nay, further, in many instances which we might adduce, a premium is held out to vice, and the more that virtue and decency have been forsaken, the more freely and the more ungrudgingly are sympathy and aid extended to the ruined profligate. The drunkard, the thief, and the harlot are patronised, patted, and petted, while the poor unfallen one, struggling to maintain a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man, is utterly disregarded. *It is not meet thus to take the children's bread and give it to dogs.* The world will never be regenerated by this

payment of "black mail." We have read that when the plundering and marauding Goths were threatening the empire of Rome, declining from its pristine vigour and glory, the danger was for a brief space averted by the payment of tribute to the barbarians. But what were the results? Why, the disease grew by what it fed on, the barbarians increased in number, and the tribute in amount, until the resources of the empire became exhausted, and the rotten carcass itself became their prey. The ethics of the Bible are complete and consistent, that is their peculiar praise. They have none of the maudlin sentimentalities nor of the extravagant one-sidedness of the ethics of man's devising. "Do good to all men as ye have the opportunity, but *especially* to them who are of the household of faith." "Use this world without abusing it, for every creature of God is good." These are the precepts of the Scripture. But man's presumption, presuming to be righteous beyond what is written, would not only extend the skirts of charity over all our brethren of mankind, but would give the largest share and the better place to the aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and to the strangers from the covenants of promise, and converting misuse into an argument against the use of the creatures of God, would urge upon all, with the fervour of zealots, the doctrine of total abstinence, nephalism, or celibacy, according to the fashion of the times. Such is not the teaching of the word of God, it takes man as he came from the hands of his Maker, body, and soul, and spirit, a

bundle of faculties, feelings, affections and desires, and strives not to eradicate any, but to sanctify all. The law of the Lord is perfect, nothing need be added to it, and nothing need be taken away from it. It is the *via media*, the middle way, the straight way, and the narrow way, which leads to life everlasting. It is the way of holiness, hedged in on the right hand and on the left by line upon line and precept upon precept, but man in the vanity of his mind would abandon this way, and walk in a way of his own devising; the fanatic would take away from the liberty of the law of God, and the licentious would add to its licence, yet it has not unfrequently happened that the philosopher in his closet, unmoved by the din of the world, and careless of its honours, abstracted from its hopes and its fears, its passions, its prejudices, and its pursuits, has been able to penetrate below the surface, and to bring up from the rich mine that lies beneath some jewel of great price, to the admiring gaze of mankind. The greatest names which adorn the pantheon of hero-worshippers, are those of men who have for the benefit of mankind brought to light some long-forgotten truths, found deep in the recesses of the human heart, overlaid and overwhelmed by the debris and deluvium of the flood of corruption. Confirming to us in these latter days the truth and the meaning of the declaration of St. John to the Church :—"Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but the old commandment which ye had from the beginning." The complete-

ness and consistency of its morality is the peculiar praise of the ethics of the Bible. It comprehends all truths. The morality of the Bible excepted (says an eminent writer), there has never appeared an ethical system, oriental or occidental, which might not fairly be described as a splendid enormity; whatever energy has been gained on one part, will be found to have been deducted from another; and if the man formed on any of these models be examined, the eminence he displays on a single line of action impoverishes and enfeebles others of his moral powers; but the man formed upon the lessons of the Scripture, which are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," will be found to be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. The Christian Church was constituted to give a body to the Word, a visible representation to the doctrines, an exemplification to the precepts of the gospel. The Christian Church is a corporate body of different parts with different functions, like our natural bodies in which we have many members in one body, and all these members have not the same office; so we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another, rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that weep.

The body thus constituted was to come out and be separate from the world, the men who constitute it, "though in the world must not be of it," mingling with their fellowmen in the innocent amusements and occupations of life, they should always carry about

with them a savour of the gospel, and have the name of their master written legibly on their foreheads, each one of them being a representative man, an epitome of the Church of which he is a member. The heterogeneous gatherings known by the name of Christian congregations are far, *very far indeed*, from resembling the primitive pattern of the Christian Church. The constituents of the Church are lost amidst the mass of nominal adherents which pervade the ungainly shape which the churches of Christendom have assumed.

> "If shape it can be called, which shape has none
> Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb;"

a mass of disunited atoms, without cohesion, without form or comeliness, having no common principle of vitality or of sensation, the men of feeling among them feeling only for themselves. This is not the Church of the New Testament, which was so instinct with a common principle of life that whether one member suffered, all the members suffered with it, or one member was honoured, all the members rejoiced with it. Morality is religion in action, and if morality, mutual love, and benevolence can be secured independently of the Church, the ground is cut away from beneath that institution, the foundation is destroyed, and the Devil's lie has triumphed over the truth of God.

This is the great game which the great adversary is playing at present, striving to delude men with the idea that they can regenerate the world without Christ, hence our temperance societies, our reformatory insti-

tutions, our ragged schools, on liberal principles, and other associations external to the Church, whose name is legion because they are many, leaving to the Church no other function than that of preaching—Talk, talk, talk.—Talk without works, ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth, laying, over and over again, the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God; but never going forward unto perfection, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.

"Turn ye to the strongholds, ye prisoners of hope. Even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee." The reason of the failure of the representative system of Church government is, that the represented themselves are in fault; it is their selfishness, their indifference, their want of true citizenship which are responsible for all the strifes, the emulations, the ambitions, the carnal contentions which have broken in pieces the unity of the Christian Church, torn in tatters the seamless robe of Christ's righteousness, and retarded the coming kingdom and glory. "Awake! awake, put on thy strength, O Zion, put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem!" It was to effect this revival that Christ Jesus came into this world; it was to arouse men to a sense of the purposes for which they were created, and to restore in humanity the effaced image of God, rather than to imprint upon it that which never was there before. In the deep recesses of the human heart, underlying all the incrustations of selfishness, and all the rubbish with

which turbulent passions and unhallowed desires have overwhelmed it, there is yet that which would acknowledge the truth of God, were that truth fairly placed before it. It is so deeply engraved on the heart of man, that when the accumulated filth of time, the overgrowth of the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things have been penetrated and removed, the same ethics which the Spirit of God has written in the Book, will be found engraven by the finger of God, on the fleshly tables of the heart. Human nature is a glorious ruin overrun and overlaid with thorns and briars and weeds, affording a receptacle for every creeping thing and noxious reptile, and a "cage for every unclean and hateful bird." But underneath all that is thus vile and valueless, lie the ruins of that wonderful and magnificent temple which God did form for himself, as a fit habitation for his Spirit to dwell in. It was to pluck up all these roots of bitterness that Christ Jesus came into the world. It was to tear asunder the covering cast over all peoples, and the veil spread over all nations, that God manifested himself in the flesh. The pulling down of the strongholds of Satan and of sin (the refuges of lies which obscure and defile the holy temple) must precede the renewal and restoration of the building. This is effected by the blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin, and by the fervour and force of his love, which consumes the enmity that is in us, the discordant affections and desires which separate us from God and from one

another, and then the Spirit of Christ, entering into the temple which the blood of Christ had cleansed (as a repairer of the breaches), restores and renews the building after the original design, on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.

CHAPTER V.

THE CONSUMMATION.

SINCE the publication of the gospel—the glad tidings of great joy—Satan has found it necessary to put on a garment of light. Men can no longer be made devil-worshippers by fear, nor be frightened into the practice of iniquity; they must be misguided, misled, overreached, flattered and beguiled by delusive appearances of good. To do evil that good may come, is the farthest length to which the fiend can venture to approach with evil suggestions the professing disciples of the Lord. There are others—alas! they are a number without number—who have never as yet heard the gospel message, or who, having heard it, turn a deaf ear to its gracious invitations—to them vice and immorality, in all their most gross and odious forms may be presented by the "evil one" without scruple and without disguise; their stomach, strong as that of the ostrich, can digest the most repulsive and the most obdurate fare. The master of deceit must, however, approach with delicacy and diplomacy those who have a form of godliness, and who make a profession of religion; he must flatter them with his

mouth, and lie unto them with his tongue: "Are ye not gods, knowing good and evil?" Your intelligence must be put between you and your Bibles. Is not your reason the supreme interpreter which it can never be your duty to disobey? A precious truth, which we Protestants are ready to admit, when read in the light of the everlasting gospel, but one which a devilish alchemy distils into a deadly poison—a soporific dose to the careless, and an intoxicating beverage to the high-minded and profane.

Men possessed of the strong delusion that they are themselves the arbiters of right and wrong, become a law unto themselves, and practise before high heaven without scruple and without remorse (like the Israelists of old before they had a king) whatever may seem good in their own eyes, and go the more hopelessly astray on account of the very admixture of truth in their error. These proud and carnally-minded men refuse to acknowledge the authority of Scripture except as a mere subordinate authority to the intelligence, sent to bear a confirmatory testimony to the deductions of the understanding; but whenever the one differs from the other, they cast it aside ignominiously, or else assign to it a place altogether inferior and subordinate.

We may imagine, if devils can laugh, or if joy can irradiate the seared and desolate hearts of the damned, the commingled smile of complacency and contempt with which hell is moved to meet this company of vain-glorious and self-deluded auxiliaries, like to that

with which the dupe is welcomed by the impostor, or that grim irradiation of joy which beams upon the victim from the eye of the destroyer.

The very extreme of liberalism we hope, however, and believe will, in these last days, become the instrumental cause of the revival of a Christian walk and conversation, as the very extravagance of speculation in former times became the instrumental cause of the revival of the simple doctrines of the gospel. It was after philosophers had rung all the changes on every form of erroneous opinions, (insomuch that, with respect to such, there is now nothing new under the sun,) for the purpose of evading the simplicity and directness of the gospel revelation: "*That God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.*" It was only then that men were made sensible of their own insufficiency "to find out the Almighty unto perfection," and recognised the fact in their humiliation, that those revelations of God which proud and carnally-minded men esteemed foolish and weak, were immensely superior in wisdom, and far more efficacious in power, than all which the wit of man was ever able to produce: "That the foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God stronger than man." Thus it will be in these practical days, when the work given us to do is the practical work, to carry out into perfection as "living epistles" of Christ the lessons of divine love, that when common sense has been outraged by the wildness of theoretical refinements, and the prodigal wastefulness of inven-

tive power, men humbled under a sense of their own insufficiency, will accept the revelation of God, and reconstructing the Church on the original principles of the divine institution, expelling from her whatsoever defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, and admitting into her whatsoever is pure, and lovely, and of good report, will employ the Church, thus holy, harmless, and undefiled, as the instrumentality of God's own appointment, for reclaiming the lapsed, converting the unconverted, instructing the ignorant, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and visiting the fatherless and the widow in their afflictions. By doing good and communicating, and by keeping herself unspotted from the world, the Church will commend herself in the sight of all men, and will come to be recognised as the divinely-constituted agency for the restitution of all things.

No desperate or sweeping change is necessary to give to the existing evangelical organisations an embodiment in all respects according to the Scriptures. Things have been moving in the right direction, and old things are passing away. The times and the seasons are known only and belong only to the Lord our God, but to us it belongs to give thanks to God and to take courage, when the signs of the times indicate that the Lord has not forgotten to be gracious, that he is working by his providence for the advancement of the kingdom of righteousness, bringing down principalities and powers, and all things that exalt themselves above the supremacy of his

Son, causing shame and confusion to cover the superstitions of the nations, and bringing the blackness of darkness upon their abominable idolatries, shaking not the earth only, but the heavens; signifying thereby, as we are given to understand, the removing of those things that are shaken, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

A band of brothers united together in a common fellowship, under no other constraint than the bonds of love, and of a cheerful and voluntary obedience—an agency of their own appointment superintending the common interests, and leaders nominated by themselves directing the common pursuits—combines in one corporate body all the powers and faculties of the individuals of which it is composed, every one among them "not looking to his own things only, but to the things of others also;" every individual member being a representative man, an epitome of the congregation of which he forms a part, the whole being made up of similars.

It is a grand preservative of character, and an immense stimulus to exertion, when a man comes to look upon himself as a representative men. In the gallant 78th Regiment of Highlanders, we remember, some years ago, to have been told by an officer who had been with them from the time the corps was originally embodied, that each man in the regiment coming out into the world for the first time from the deep glens and mountain *corries* of Kintail and

Lochalsh, regarded himself as entrusted with the honour of his name and kindred.

"Evan's, Donald's fame rung in each clansman's ears."

The consequence was, that at a time when corporal and degrading punishments were of daily occurrence in every other regiment in the service, the 78th Regiment was preserved in such strict discipline and honourable fame by moral constraint alone, as to be by universal acknowledgment, in the field and in quarters, a pattern to the British army. The reproach of bringing disgrace on his name, and country, and lineage, was enough to recall any delinquent among them to a sense of duty and to a willing obedience. We believe that such a feeling of mutual love, of common sympathy, and of affectionate regard for the honour and welfare of Christ's kingdom, might be elicited in a congregation of Christians by more familiar intercourse, and by a more intimate fellowship, until at length, loving their neighbours as themselves, they come to realise towards one another the sentiments of the early Christians, and to practise the practice of the primitive Church, in so far as the difference of times and of places might render it expedient or possible.

The practice of the early Christians, associated in the Pentecostal Church, realised the idea of communion among them. All the graces, gifts, means of usefulness, spiritual and material, in the possession of any of the members, were placed at the disposal of the corporate body for the common good, yet not of constraint,

but willingly was the dedication of property made; for while it remained, it was in the power of the possessor, and when given away, it was according to his own good pleasure. "The stream of liberality (writes Dr. Candlish) flowed so copiously, so freshly, and so freely, from the warm source of sympathising hearts, that it was not merely a distribution of needful things on the part of those who had them, among those who had them not, but such an identification of the whole in one, as amounted virtually and practically to a community of goods." We truly rejoiced when we fell on this paragraph from the pen of the eloquent Doctor. The book ("The two great Commandments") from which we have quoted, expounds, with a lucid energy, the doctrine of love; but without a living organization like that of the Apostolic Church, fitted to the circumstances of the times, to give the doctrine a practical direction, the mere promulgation of the doctrine, which has been sounded a thousand times in our ears, is but a very pleasant song, a *vox et preterea nihil*, a flourish of trumpets in a pantomime.

The formula of Victor Hugo, the socialist, expresses, in a few words, the obligation to one another of the members of the body of Christ: "From each according to his faculties; to each according to his wants." Every member of the body, labouring in his vocation according to the ability God has given to him (not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit), that he may himself not be chargeable to any man, and "that he may have to give to him that needeth." This Chris-

tian socialism, this voluntary community of goods, is not an utopian, fanciful, or impracticable speculation; it was, and it may be again. Nay, it shall and must be, in its reality, though the form and fashion of it may be changed. When love is perfected by the one spirit, actuating and animating all the members, an identity of feeling cannot fail to be attained; "For no one ever yet hated his own body, but nourisheth it and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church." This spirit of liberality and of brotherly love is the end of our perfection on this side the grave, the nearest approach which, in practice, we can attain to the similitude of him, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich." "Little children (says St. John), let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth, and hereby we shall know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him," having fellowship with one another, in virtue of our common fellowship with God, and having our fellowship with God confirmed and assured to ourselves, "because we love the brethren."

Socialism and communism are words of terrible import to the thoughtless and unbelieving, and made applicable to the multitude, "who all seek their own, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's;" who have no common sympathies, and no common pursuits, they would, doubtlessly, in practice, produce a hellish uniformity of misery, sensuality and sloth. But the organization of the Church is contrived to produce a

willingness to give, with an unwillingness to receive. The members are taught to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, "how he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive." And the Apostolic command, "To labour diligently, to keep one's self from being chargeable to any one;" and "that if any one would not work, neither should he eat." A church, then, constituted on the Scripture plan, and obedient to the commandments of Christ and his apostles, the members of which are restricted to those who make a credible profession of belief in the things which Jesus has revealed, and a creditable performance of the things which Jesus has commanded, has no occasion to stand aghast, in diffidence and dismay, at the prospect of a Scriptural socialism, and voluntary community of goods. Let the Church but return from the devious paths, among which she has been so long wandering, into the good old way upon which she set out at the beginning, and she will find no great difficulty in practising, to the very letter, the communism of the Scriptures. It is to our brethren in the Lord we are to do good, and to communicate. It is our brethren in the Lord who are to form the Christian commonwealth, it is among them that the community of goods is to prevail, and socialism to be established; and asks the apostle, "Whoso has this world's goods, and seeth his brother (that is, his brother in the Lord) have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" "If we love not our brother (our brother who is con-

formed to the image of Christ), whom we have seen, how can we love God whom we have not seen," and of whom Christ is the express image?

Christ, as head of the Church, has promised, "That there is no man who has left house, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for his sake, and the gospel's but shall receive a hundredfold, *now*, in this time—houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands." This promise is plain enough, as plain as words can make it, and the fulfilment of it would be as sure to our experience as the promise is to our understanding, were that Christian socialism to prevail, that community of property and affection which the Lord enjoins, which is the bond of perfectness, and which constitutes the Church of the New Testament, or the communion of saints. But until men fulfil the will of Christ, and do those things which are commanded; until they, whom he has bought to himself by his blood, esteem themselves not their own but his, they cannot expect the fulfilment of Christ's promise, until they perform the conditions on which the fulfilment of the promise manifestly depends.

Love is the weapon put into the hands of the Church, for the subjugation of the world to Christ; herself constrained by the love of Christ, she constrains others, by the fervour and force of love. How is it, then, that we are unable to point to any one community of men, to any one single or solitary congregation, which practises this benevolence, this Christian socialism, this

methodical illustration of loving our neighbours as ourselves? Why does not this grace of charity manifest itself among us, the very first grace of the Spirit, which bloomed and flourished in the primitive Church, and which drew upon her the eyes of all men? Why is this love of the brethren so entirely wanting among us, so ostentatiously excluded by a false philosophy, that the aged disciple may be seen (a spectacle sad enough to make the angels weep) rotting away in an almshouse, soul and body together, amidst a pestilential crowd of drunkards, whoremongers, and blasphemers? "What could I have done more for my vineyard that I have not done for it (saith the Lord of Hosts); wherefore, when I looked for grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" A review of the past history of the Church unfolds the cause of this sad catastrophe. God hedged in his vineyard, which is the peculiar people he has chosen for himself, by line upon line and precept upon precept; but men have taken away the hedges and broken down the walls thereof, so that a promiscuous multitude, who were neither chosen nor called, who had neither part nor lot in the matter, who had neither the name of Jesus on their foreheads, nor the love of him in their hearts, found admittance into the membership of the Church, and effected a radical change on her constitution and character. "Men do not gather grapes off thorns, nor figs off thistles!" The weapon of our warfare, which is not carnal, has lost its edge, its point has been turned, its temper has been destroyed, by the union

and communion which exists between the religious and the profane. The heathen abroad and the heathen at home (the actual and the virtual) despise our religion, and refuse to accept of it, because they see so many unworthy specimens of it, marked with the seal of the guild.

The melancholy fact is, that the external fabric of the Church, as Christ designed it, has no existence. All the Evangelical Churches, it is true, repose on the sure foundation, and rest upon the rock of ages—for that let us thank God, and take courage—but they universally are built up, very largely at least, "of wood, hay, stubble," perishable materials, which cannot stand the fire which is to try every man's work of what sort it is. Let us, then, who have been forewarned of the coming trial, and who believe the word of warning, let us be forearmed against it, and, by substituting for the "wood, hay, stubble," which cannot stand the fire, the "gold, silver, precious stones," which shall even come out of the fire more resplendent than before, refined and purified, be preparing for that fiery trial, which is to try them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth.

The purging the constituency of the Churches, under an impartial exercise of common sense and piety, would no doubt greatly diminish the membership of the Churches, and to the worldly-wise it might seem an act of suicidal folly. What of that? "If a thing be a good thing (says Mr. Carlyle) no

matter though it be a small thing, it will grow." A muscular Christianity, working, willing, and wiry, would speedily replace the overgrown, bloated, asthmatic, paralytic corporations, which have made a covenant with death, by the admission into their membership of those who by their practice belie their Christian profession, and tarnish the character and blast the reputation of the Church. The evil which has gained strength during centuries of lax administration, might be thoroughly eradicated by a vigorous discipline in the course of a few years.

We have read how the lookers on trembled for the issue of the battle, when they saw the red small line of Highlanders on the heights of Balaclava, the only obstacle interposed between the overwhelming host of the enemy and the citadel in which was treasured all the necessaries of the whole army for sustenance and for war. On the valour of this small band of heroes, —on their loyalty to their sovereign,—on their mutual support of one another,—on their stern determination to die in the discharge of their duty, rather than yield a hair's breadth—all was seen to depend. Balaclava lost, all was lost together, and all the perils, privations, and deaths of the long and dreary winter entirely and utterly thrown away. The boldest held his breath for a time, in eager and anxious expectation. Amid the tumult and the din and the smoke of the battle, the progress of the fight was but obscurely discernible; but when the smoke rolled

away, and when the sun again illuminated the landscape, there was seen as if rivetted to the rock the same small red line of living valour, with their enemies in flight, scattered like chaff before them; and then arose the shout of their admiring friends, a shout which made the welkin ring.

Thus we may imagine that the little company sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, and clothed in dyed garments of Bozrah, are surrounded with clouds of witnesses, who with intense anxiety watch the progress of the fight. The ark of the covenant is entrusted to their keeping, with all its life-giving and life-sustaining benefits. Jesus came into the world to effect the restitution of all things, by redeeming unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. If these fail in the time of need, if they desert their profession of faith in him, their practice of obedience to him, if they abandon their colours, all, all is lost; the positions already won must be relinquished; Chaos, and Erebus, and blackest midnight will resume their sway; the whole world will sink forlorn into the Stygean quagmire from out of which the Captain of our salvation came to deliver it. It is of the Lord's mercy they are not consumed, so numberless is the host of the ungodly, so fierce the onset of their enemies. To strengthen their hands and to encourage their hearts, to persevere without wavering, the voice of their leader sounds in their ears, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." "Fear not, little flock, it is the Father's good pleasure to give

you the klngdom." A band of brethren organised shoulder and shoulder together, animated by one spirit, upheld by one hope of their calling, obedient to the voice of their leader—the Lord Jesus—or to the voice of those who speak to them in his name: "For they know not the voice of strangers." The Holy Spirit helping their infirmities, strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, fear no evil, and are prepared for duty or for trial as the will of the Lord may be concerning them. As members of Christ's body, Christ's glory is their glory, Christ's exaltation their exaltation. Their joy in his triumph is personal, individual, and selfish, and their selfishness is social, embracing every member of his body, for they are all one in Christ Jesus.

The saints of God are not sectarian; they love all those in every place who love the Lord Jesus, by whatsoever name they are called; they are ready to give, with expressions of brotherly love, a hearty welcome to all those whom, in the judgment of charity, they believe, that Christ is not ashamed to call his brethren. They have the same hope towards God, and the same faith in the justifying efficacy of the blood of Christ; they all profess to be striving towards the same perfection of obedience, and all aspiring to some recompence of reward.

We have all of us an immediate and a common interest in hastening on the kingdom of glory; for Christ will not return until his enemies be put under his feet, and until his return our glory cannot be

perfected. Looking, therefore, for that blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God our Saviour, it is the wisdom, and the interest, and the duty of every one of us, to assist one another as working together with Christ, that his kingdom may come, and that his will may, as speedily as possible, be done in earth as it is done in heaven; to labour diligently, and to pray fervently.

It is the personal application and appropriation of the benefits which, bringing them down to the level of the human capacities and feelings, divested of all vague generalities, which can alone secure for the gospel message a general and cordial acceptance by a carnal and self-seeking generation. We are not invited to be good, by him who knows the nature of man, from any abstract love of goodness. We are invited to be good from the consideration of the advantages of goodness to ourselves. Many of the excellent of the earth, influenced by transcendental notions, and many of the sordid, actuated by the most ungenerous suspicions, alike oppose the presentation to the worldling of any inducement to forsake the evil of his ways; forgetting that the whole scheme of salvation is one of inducements, addressed to men individually, to cleave to that which is good, on a consideration of their individual and personal interests, and that those who have received the gift are then expected to feel and to acknowledge their obligations to the giver of every good, and of every perfect gift, and with grateful hearts to render again unto the

Lord for all his benefits, by dedicating themselves to his service, and to the promotion of his glory. It is as much our wisdom as it is our duty, to walk in the ways of the Lord's appointment.

He who created our nature had respect to the work of his own hands, and both by practice and by precept, by his own example, and by the instructions he has left for our guidance in our warfare with the world, he had an especial respect to this one aspect of human nature. "Do good and communicate." "Freely give as freely ye have received." "As every one has received the gift, even so minister one to another, as stewards of the manifold mercies of God," and "*ye shall have treasures in heaven.*" "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth." Liberality exercised from right motives is the sowing of good seed, to which God has promised an increase even more exceeding abundantly than we can ask or think. We have only to show to men that what we propose is for their interests, and we shall very generally succeed in accomplishing our designs; but the allurements we set before them must be such as they can appreciate and comprehend; we must modify our solicitations according to their respective attainments and growth in grace, thus becoming all things to all men, if so be that by any means we may gain some. Jesus, who knew men, and what was in men, did not cast his pearls before swine; nor did his apostles speak to the multitude as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal. They fed them with milk, and not with

strong meat, until they were able to bear it. The prize they set before them, the recompense of the reward, was suited to their necessities, and adapted to the state of their understandings and their feelings. As the scales fell from their eyes, and as the veil was taken from their hearts, they were led by degrees to comprehend, with all saints, the length and the breadth, the height and the depth of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. "Who shall show us any good is that which many say? Come and see, come and see the good of his chosen, the exceeding riches of his grace," the earnest of the inheritance, the foretaste of the everlasting possession, is the answer which the Church should be able to make to this inquiry. The great principle we have enunciated, and the great end we have endeavoured to promote, is that principle which we believe that Scripture indicates, and that end which experience confirms—that for reclaiming the outcast and the lapsed, the method of attraction is a far more potent instrument than that of aggression in the hands of the Church. Holiness is the great end to be accomplished, and the exhibition of the gain of godliness is but the means to that end. What a powerful incentive it would be to the sinner to walk in newness of life, could the Church testify with the Psalmist: "I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

The spectacle of a society in the enjoyment of

peace and plenty; mutual love and holy joy, is the attraction intended by Divine Wisdom to draw the selfish sinner to consideration and attention. He beholds a great sight, he sees the miraculous substitution of a diffusive benevolence, of an unaffected piety, of a mutual dependency, taking place of that dissevering selfishness, of that haughty isolation, of that self-preference and self-reliance which have the chief influence in separating man from man. He joins himself with the pious, and associates himself with the good, until he begins to smell of the myrrh, and aloes, and cassia out of the ivory palaces wherewith they have made him glad, and he who was formerly a blasphemer and injurious, may now be seen in his right mind, like Saul among the prophets, esteeming it his highest privilege, honour, and delight, to do good and to communicate, and to throw with his whole heart his most active energies into the service of the gospel. It is thus by plucking one brand after another from the burning, drawing them to herself by the cords of love, and binding them to herself by an enlightened and sanctified self-interest, which are the "bands of a man," that the Church is to grow up into the stature and similitude of Him whose fulness filleth all in all. When true self-love and social become the same, when the welfare of the individual becomes indissolubly conjoined with the welfare of the community of which he forms a part, he is no more a stranger and a foreigner, but a fellow-

citizen of the saints, and a member of the household of God.

To do is the way to know, and to know is the way to do; but when knowledge leads to nothing, (says the philosophic Volney,) nothing is done to acquire it. A grand working world this would be were the doctrines of Christianity to find their rightful place in her religious organisations, and were a visible and effective industry for the general good to become as distinguishing an attribute of the mystical body, as it was of Him whose similitude it professes to represent. Then would come to pass, that while the Church saw Christ reflected in the word, the world would see him in the Church, which is his body.

A congregation of earnest men and women, helping one another forward in every good work, exciting such as grow slack, and encouraging one another against despondency, under the leading of the constituted authorities of the Church, appointed by themselves, is an instrument for good, both external and internal, being both blessed and a blessing, the value of which it is impossible to estimate. As in the natural body, when in health, every member is active in its own proper department, working for its own good and for the good of the whole, so when the "mystical body"—the Church—is in a healthy condition, every one should be doing something—every member according to the gifts bestowed upon him—no one standing idle—the prevenient wisdom of God

having all together taken out of the way the excuse that no one has hired them. The elders and the deacons are, under the pastor, the leaders of the host of the godly; the captains over hundreds, and the captains over tens, in the departments respectively of the spiritual and the temporal, affording nuclei around which the members of the Church may cluster, according to their several capacities and inclinations, and form *among themselves* every kind of combination which has for its object glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will to the children of men; each having its own circle within the circle of the congregation, and that again within the greater circle of the denomination, and that within the larger circumference still of the universal Church visible upon the earth, which, by the sure word of prophecy, is destined to cover the whole earth, and effect the restitution of all things.

The reformation now in progress, the disruption from established churches, the abandonment of endowments, the liberalisation of institutions, the second reformation, is the beginning of the end. Christ is the only name given under heaven whereby men can be saved, and the community of his disciples, according to the scheme of the Church, (*the corporate body,*) receiving from Christ through his members, made willing by the indwelling of his Spirit, day by day her daily bread, is the only commonwealth which, having life in itself, can realise the liberty, equality, fraternity, which have been the theme of the Utopian

dreams of the philosophers, and the benevolent aspirations of the philanthropists. Liberty, equality, fraternity, are unattainable by any political arrangement, on account of the discordant elements which enter into the formation of civil society; the object of civil government is security from wrong, the protection of man from the injustice and violence of his fellow-man. It fulfils its function when it secures a fair field and no favour for individual enterprise and exertion, and extends impartially alike its protection over one and over all. Civil government transgresses the object of its being, when it presumes to teach or to preach; politics at best is but the science of justice, and is independent of benevolence. But the Church was constituted to do good and to communicate, to instruct the ignorant, to reclaim the lapsed, to convert the unconverted; to raise the poor out of the dust, and lift up the needy from the dunghill; to cultivate a genuine sympathy for one another as brethren in the Lord; to produce equality by teaching the doctrine of fraternity, and fraternity by the establishment of equality. Given liberty and equality in the Christian Church, and the product will be fraternity, if we mistake not. The scheme of the Church will, in its integrity and completeness, not only attain unto, but greatly surpass all our expectations and all our desires; "for eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the hearts of man to conceive the things which God has prepared for them that love him."

We have assured confidence and hope that all things are working together for good, that the delusions and divisions within the Church, which bring disgrace upon our Christian profession, and the multiplied plans without the Church to supplement or supersede the action of the corporate body, and to evade the scheme of the Almighty, will all be overruled to the discomfiture of the adversary, and for the promotion of the kingdom which is peace and righteousness.

> "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh,
> The Lord shall hold them in derision."

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen, (says the Lord,) to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke. Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out *to thy house?* When thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from *thine own flesh.* Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee, and the glory of the Lord shall be thy rear-ward; thou shalt call, and the Lord shall answer, thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am."

> "O city of the Lord, begin
> The universal song,
> And let the scattered villages
> The cheerful notes prolong,

Let Kedar's wilderness afar
  Lift up its lonely voice,
And let the tenants of the rock
  With accents rude rejoice.
Till, 'midst the streams of distant lands,
  The islands sound his praise,
And all combined with one accord,
  Jehovah's glory raise."
    Amen and amen.

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